STENDHAL

LAMIEL

Translated and with an Introduction by
T. W. EARP

DIRECTION 23

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Introduction

In the beginning of August, 1839 Henri Beyle (Stendhal) wrote to Marshal Soult, Minister for Foreign Affairs in Paris, informing him of his arrival at Civita Vecchia to resume his duties as French consul there. What must have been one of the longest leaves ever wrung from a government by a minor official had at last come to an end. For over three years Stendhal had been released, on the plea of ill-health, from the little Italian port which he detested, and had strenuously employed the time. Returning to Paris, where *Le Rouge et le Noir* continued to shock new readers, he led a life of great social activity, with Prosper Mérimée as a constant companion and Balzac and Thiers among his widening circle of friends. Every evening he had a choice of salons where romanticism was encouraged in literature and liberalism in politics, and at such assemblies he was an assiduous attendant, freely indulging his love of paradox and discharging caustic judgments on friend and foe alike, to the mingled scandal and amusement of the gathering. He was, indeed, well on the way to becoming a Parisian per-

sonality. Henri Monnier did him the honor of a caricature which shows him bald and ventripotent; but he had not given up the role of conscientious amorist and he subjected Mme. Judith Gauthier to an elaborate siege, which failed in its ultimate purpose yet won him her affection—an affection in which there was something of pity for the loneliness of spirit which she detected beneath the bravura of his public appearances. And through Prosper Mérimée he also made friends on this prolonged vacation with two little Spanish girls, daughters of the Comtesse de Montijo, delighting them with his memories of Napoleon, which were still remembered by one of them when she was the Empress Eugénie.

But work also claimed a share in Stendhal's three years of liberty, during which he found time for a two months' visit to England. His longest absence from Paris, however, covered a great deal of 1837, when he made an extensive tour of provincial France in order to write *Mémoires d'un Touriste,* which appeared next year in two garrulous, entertaining volumes and pleased the author more than the public or the publisher, who declined to accept material for a third. At the same time he was intermittently contributing his *Chroniques Italiennes* to the *Revue des Deux Mondes,* and it was from his vision of a turbulent, passionate Italy of the past, united with his own memories of the country, that in fifty-two days—from November 4th to December 26th, 1838—he dictated one of the world's greatest novels, *La Chartreuse de*

Parme, in his hotel bedroom. Then over this period of freedom and plenitude fell the shadow of Civita Vecchia.

The duration of Stendhal's leave depended on Comte Mathieu Molé, who had been Foreign Minister since 1830 and became in addition Prime Minister in April, 1839. He and Stendhal were slightly acquainted, meeting occasionally in the salon of Mme. de Castellane. It is more important that they had friends in common, to whose persuasions the minister was accessible. When the consul's relays of extended leave were about to expire, Mme. de Castellane or Mme. Victor du Tracy dropped a necessary word and Civita Vecchia faded into the background again. But in May, 1839, Molé fell, to be succeeded in both his offices by Marshal Soult; and the permanent officials in the Foreign Office, although they equally objected to Stendhal at his post or away from it, took their revenge for the privilege he had enjoyed by swiftly obtaining the order for his recall to duty.

He went as slowly as possible, making the journey from Paris to Civita Vecchia last six weeks and excusing his tardy progress, in a letter written to Marshal Soult when he eventually arrived, on the grounds that an access of gout had held him up at Genoa and again at Leghorn. Actually he had made a long pause at Florence, where there is little doubt that he renewed relations with an old flame, Giulia Martini. It was she who, as Giulia Ranieri, a then unmarried girl of nineteen, had startled, and even alarmed, Stendhal in

Paris in 1830, when he himself was forty-seven, by a declaration of love. Taken aback, and although the author of a treatise entitled *De l'Amour* and a professed expert on the subject, he asked for two months to think the matter over, at the end of which period Giulia became his mistress. Shortly after, on his appointment as consul at Trieste—changed to Civita Vecchia on account of his disfavor with the Austrian authorities—he asked her hand in marriage from her uncle and guardian, the Tuscan envoy in Paris, who replied that she should decide for herself, and she had a further surprise for Stendhal in her refusal of his offer. But although she married another—a young Tuscan official—and lived happily with him and their two children in Florence, she continued the earlier liaison when at long intervals Stendhal could make occasion to visit that city. On his arrival at Civita Vecchia the memory of their latest meeting was still fresh. When he settled down to write a new novel as a means of exorcising the regathering tedium, he endowed its heroine with many of Giulia's traits.

The new work was *Lamiel*. Stendhal had also thought of *Village in Normandy* and *The French under King Philippe* as possible titles, while on publishing *La Chartreuse de Parme* he announced *Lamiel,* a novel in two volumes, as already in the press. Actually he did not start writing until the first week in October, 1839, and on March 15th, 1842, eight days before he died, he was adding a further chapter to

his confused and incomplete manuscript. This, with the mass of his other papers and unfinished works, was deposited after his death in the municipal library at his birthplace, Grenoble. There it was deciphered —he wrote an appalling hand—and put in order by Casimir Stryienski, a pioneer in Stendhalian research, under whose care *Lamiel* appeared in Paris in 1889. Since then Stryienski's reading of the text has been revised by M. Henri Martineau in his *Divan* edition.

At Grenoble, mingled with the book's rough draft, are notes in which Stendhal, like Henry James later, though less deliberately, discusses with himself his general plan and the details of his characterization and construction. Of special interest are those in which he reviews his novel's method and intentions.

Thus at the head of his manuscript, under the date October 1st, 1839, he writes:

"If the narrative is too heavily charged with philosophy, it is the philosophy which makes the effect of novelty on the mind, and not the narrative."

"Ask myself at each incident—Shall I recount this philosophically or in the narrative manner, according to Aristotle's doctrine?"

The blending of "straight" narrative with philosophy, which in Stendhal's case largely took the form of social and political comment, was a characteristic of his work as a novelist and it was, indeed, the philosophy which made his notoriety. But from a note of a week later there are signs that in *Lamiel* he wished the narrative to be the more prominent element—a

view confirmed by the synopsis of the unfinished portion. The note runs:

"A different plan from the *Chartreuse:*

"1.—Subject more intelligent;

"2.—Wit in the style;

"3.—I make the characters known in advance. This novel will not take the appearance of *Memoirs,* of which the Duchess of Vicenza complained."

On February 19th, 1840, under the heading "Advice to the young man"—himself—he again remarks on the danger of heaviness, this time in characterization:

"Too much depth in the description of a character prevents *laughter.* Thus the greater part of what I have written on Doctor Sansfin will remain in the substructions of the edifice."

And as though to reassure himself with a reminder of his facility, he adds:

"The natural tendency of Dominique's [Stendhal's] imagination is to *see,* to invent characteristic details."

"My talent—if it is talent—lies in *improvisation.* I forget all that I write, I could compose four novels on the same subject and equally forget them all."

Then in July, 1841, before packing the manuscript of *Lamiel* to take it with him on his last leave in Paris, which ended in his death, he wrote:

"I will not trouble myself with the actual abridgment of what was written before May 25th, 1840; I will abridge it in Paris while it is being published. *I*

must follow the rules of contemporary fashion, though always adapting it to my ideas. The great and actual object is *laughter.*"

In short, Stendhal wished to write a popular novel which would entertain. But in spite of his boasted ease of composition, and although he was the author of two masterpieces completed almost without a pause, it took him infinite pains to strike what he considered the contemporary note in fiction. The *Lamiel* dossier at Grenoble shows an unwonted attention to detail. The chief characters, like Dr. Sansfin and the Duchesse de Miossens, are each the subject of more than one long descriptive note in the manner of the seventeenth-century portrait writers.

"Sansfin is doctor at Langanerie; a very lively intelligence without any depth, he perceives nothing by imagination, but feels sensitively and analyzes all that exists and all that happens to him, as a man lying in a bad bed at an inn feels all its bumps. Sansfin's hate makes his vanity suffer, and his hate suffers from his vanity."

Here is one of the descriptions of Lamiel herself: "She is a little too tall and too thin; I have seen her between the Bastille and the Porte St. Denis, and in the steamboat from Honfleur to Havre; her head is the perfection of Norman beauty; a superb high forehead, *blond cendré* hair, an admirable and faultless little nose, blue eyes not quite big enough, chin narrow but a little too long; her face is a perfect oval

and one can only take exception to her mouth, which has somewhat the shape and the turned-down corners of a pike's."

And although the book is unfinished the two following sketches of characters, whom the narrative has yet to introduce, show, as well as the synopsis, that Stendhal saw on to the end in his mind:

"*Pierre Valbayre,* robber, good-looking, fair, passion for Lamiel; no energy for great crimes."

"*Marc Pintard,* robber and murderer, man of energy, terribly pitted with smallpox, very ugly, black crinkly hair, extremely brave."

Another care of Stendhal's was chronological exactitude, and here again he worked on solid foundations:

"The episode of the flares takes place in 1817; on that day Lamiel, born in 1813, is four years old; Fédor, born in 1809, is eight.

"When Fédor falls in love with Lamiel, he is nineteen at most, Lamiel fifteen—1828, therefore. . . .

"Doctor Sansfin, born in 1790, is twenty-eight at the time of the Mission in 1818, when he traces the three sets of initials in the ashes of the hearth in Mme. de Miossens's drawing room."

Although he prepared the way with such thoroughness, Stendhal made two false starts on his first chapter. The first version begins: "At the commencement of this story, that is to say, towards the end of 183–, in a little Normandy village which we will call Carville, so as to give no displeasure to anyone, lived

Lamiel; she was the liveliest and gentlest girl in the whole of Cotentin. . . ." Then follows a short development of Lamiel's character before the version is discarded. The second attempt begins: "Towards the last years of the reign of Charles X, that is to say, in 1828 or 1829, Doctor Sansfin was a poor devil of a doctor in Normandy, possessing as his sole worldly goods a wretched horse on which he went his rounds, two dogs and a gun, for he pretended to be a fine shot. . . ." And Sansfin's character is then developed as Lamiel's had been previously.

It was not until the third start, where, in his indecision as to whether Lamiel or Sansfin should have the honors, he compromises on a description of Carville, that Stendhal felt really launched. He notes:

"What an injustice to the landscapes of Normandy, etc."

"I arrive at the duchess's—I, the great-nephew of the family notaries, etc. Then after making my exposition, I say—'I won't speak of myself any more,' or 'I give up the first person.' All that follows is only the narrative of a simple ordinary storyteller."

"The introduction as it stands, with little details added. It is by this artifice that W. S. [Walter Scott] avoids alarming common readers."

"Chapter II—Sansfin's fall in front of the washerwomen, then all is plain sailing."

After such self-debate and conscientious planning *Lamiel* was at last under way. Although unfinished it

is a magnificent fragment. The characters of the heroine, the diabolical doctor, the duchess, her son and the Parisian roués are entirely realized, and had the author's intention been no more than to trace the growth of a peasant girl into a fashionable *cocotte,* he need hardly have added more to the book as it stands. With a quick dénouement on the next unwritten page it would be rounded off. What stands, allowing for the roughness and verbal repetitions of a first draft, is Stendhal at his best, and his adherents are sooner nervous whether he could successfully have filled out the synopsis of the ensuing chapters than at all in doubt about the existing ones. Yet, after all, in *Le Rouge et le Noir* he had triumphantly handled a criminal theme of much greater complication than that promised in *Lamiel,* just as the heroines with whom he engaged in his *Chroniques Italiennes*—the Abbess of Castro, Vittoria Acearomboni and Beatrice Cenci—were of a more tortuous psychology than Valbayre's single-purposed accomplice would have proved.

It is true that Lamiel has sometimes been spoken of as "a Julien Sorel in petticoats," but while the hero of *Le Rouge et le Noir* tenaciously climbing to his tragic destiny, using love as an instrument of ambition and yet so much under its domination, is a credible male character, his feminine counterpart would be a mere monster. Lamiel is quite without ambition; it is, paradoxically, her very lack of it which causes her social advancement, and that, in the unwritten chap-

ters, she was almost contemptuously to abandon. As M. Alain says, "Lamiel is entirely natural, and even without any affectation or trace of vanity."

For an illustration of ambition it is to Dr. Sansfin that we must turn; he, indeed, might be compared to a Julien Sorel with every quality blackened. There is a fine dash of the Shakespearian villain in his soliloquies, and his hump still further accentuates the resemblance to a rustic Richard III. We have seen that he was almost given the office of starting the book, and it says much for Stendhal's instinctive tact and sense of truth as an author that, after balancing them in importance at the beginning of the book, the scales gradually tilt in Lamiel's favor until she altogether absorbs the interest, while Sansfin becomes a secondary villain.

Secondary, because the first villain is boredom. Boredom haunts the castle and, apart perhaps from the dancing field, the village of Carville; it presides at the feasts of the Paris roués; it attaches to Lamiel, the duchess and her son. It was the new malady of the period and, incidentally, Stendhal, especially at Civita Vecchia, was constantly in its throes. His diagnosis of its effect on his characters—it was he and not, as is generally supposed, Baudelaire, who introduced it into literature—says much for his perception of the contemporary scene.

For if, possibly, the impish idea of rewriting Marivaux's *Vie de Marianne* in terms of Eugène Sue had

its part in the first conception of *Lamiel,* and if it occurred to him that this might make a splendid potboiler, he no sooner began the undertaking than the framework for a successful novel in the taste of the day cracked to pieces, broken beneath the wealth of life, observation, and humor which he poured into it. Even the minor characters—the Hautemares, Mlle. Anselme, the oafish Berville—are full-scale; the political background is vividly touched in; and though "philosophy" is kept in its proper place, truth to human nature irradiates the book as a whole. But its best and most authoritative praise comes from M. Louis Aragon, who said recently, "Nowhere as in *Lamiel,* his last novel, which death did not allow him to finish, the real world, not the photographed world, but the human world, full of scents and songs, with its sensitive confusion yet its definite pattern—nowhere else is the real world to be found in Stendhal as it is in *Lamiel.*"

The literary references in "Lamiel" deal mainly with the heroine's reading. At an early age, she finds pleasure in a juvenile version of an old romance of chivalry, the *History of the Four Sons Aymon,* while a translation of Virgil's *Aeneid* interests her on account of the Dido episode. But a more profound influence, which later had its part in her attraction to Valbayre, were the anonymous popular biographies of Cartouche, a 17th-century desperado who terrorized Paris with his gang until their capture and execution,

and of Mandrin, an 18th-century contrabandit and brigand, who long operated with his band in south-eastern France before the law caught up with them.

At the castle, the works read aloud by Lamiel to the duchess were of a different kind. Apart from the Government newspaper, the *Quotidienne,* they consisted chiefly in the edifying romances of Mme. de Genlis, governess to the children of the Duke of Orléans before the revolution. Among her charges was the future king, Louis-Philippe. When, however, in the duchess's absence, Lamiel had free run of the castle library, she chose Voltaire's tales, the correspondence of Grimm, the 18th-century encyclopaedist and liberal writer, and *Gil Blas,* the picaresque and very amoral novel by Lesage, of the same period.

There is reference to an English writer, very popular in France, and, indeed, throughout Europe, when we are told that M. Le Cloud's sermon during the mission at Carville was in the style of Mrs. Radcliffe. She wrote what were known as "Gothic novels," at the end of the 18th, and the beginning of the 19th century. They were highly sensational works, in which the mysterious and supernatural were leading elements.

The great French dramatist of the 17th century, Racine, is obliquely referred to when the duchess answers Hautemare's impertinence with the single word, "Begone!" The same word is used with striking effect by Racine's hero, Bazajet, in the play named after him.

The references in "Lamiel" to French history and contemporary politics have, for the most part, their bearing upon the alarms of the Duchesse de Miossens as a Royalist and ultraconservative who, having experienced one revolution, lives in constant fear of another. She looks back with regret to the years before *1789,** when the Paris mob, in the first act of revolutionary violence, captured and began the demolition of the Bastille prison, later bringing the Royal family from Versailles to virtual imprisonment in Paris in the Tuileries palace. The duchess herself joined the *Emigration*—the flight of such nobles as could escape from the fury of revolution over the French frontier to the shelter of other countries. She lived, until Napoleon assumed power in France, in the village adjoining *Hartwell House,* the residence near London of *Louis XVIII,* next brother to the executed *Louis XVI* and, therefore, titular king of France, who had fled to exile in England with his younger brother who later succeeded him as *Charles X*. When Napoleon made overtures to the nobles abroad to return to France, the duchess refused and would not come back until his defeat and relegation to Elba in *1814*. But she was still haunted by the memory of Louis XVI's execution in *1793,* fearing a rising of the *Jacobins,* the element of the population which still retained revolutionary sympathies. Inci-

* The italicized words in this note give the key to passages in the text of the novel which may require historical elucidation.

dentally, the soldiers and adherents of Napoleon also counted as Jacobins among the more uneducated Royalists and conservatives, and thus Hautemare's nephew, who had enlisted under him during the period of his return to France from Elba until his final abdication in *1815,* was considered a Jacobin by his uncle. Normandy itself, in which Carville was situated, was in general Royalist, and a stronghold of the *Chouans,* the Royalist insurrectionaries who carried on a guerilla warfare against the forces of the revolutionary government. Lamiel, in the matter of the passport, remembers the strict examination of identity-papers by the government *gendarmerie* in their search for the Chouans and their supporters.

On account of his enlightened principles, the duchess, we are told, disapproves of Louis XVIII, who returned to France and assumed actual kingship on the first downfall of Napoleon in 1814. During the Hundred Days he retired to Belgium, but on the final end of Napoleon's régime and the exile to St. Helena in 1815, he resumed his rule, which continued until his death in 1824. It is in the beginning of his reign, in 1817 or 1818, that the first two chapters of "Lamiel" take place, with the incident of the flares during the mission service, which was part of a Catholic campaign of propaganda throughout France, engaged upon to further the cause of political reaction as much as with a religious purpose. Then, after a lapse in time, Lamiel's adoption and Sansfin's altercation with the washerwomen occur in the beginning of

Charles X's reign, which lasted from 1824 to 1830, while the major part of the book, from Lamiel's adolescence onwards, is placed in its last years.

Charles X is a king much more to the duchess's taste than was his liberal-minded brother, Louis XVIII. But even she sees that, priest-ridden and reactionary, with the set purpose of re-establishing the old régime that existed before 1793, Charles is heading for disaster. Eagerly she reads the Government newspaper, the *Quotidienne,* to follow the course of events, finding a hope of safety in the counsels of moderation which the Prime Minister, *M. de Villèle,* tries to impose upon the king. But Charles dismissed Villèle for the ultraconservative *Polignac,* whose obstinate extremism the duchess rightly regards as imbecility. On the issue by the Government of the so-called *Ordinances*—decrees for checking the liberty of the Press—the Opposition deputies in the Parliament and the leading radical journalists in Paris gave the signal for revolt. This is the revolution known as "Les Trois Glorieuses"—"The Three Glorious Days" which lasted from July 26 to 28, 1830. It ended with the abdication of Charles X and his departure to exile in England, and later Austria, followed by his replacement on the throne by his cousin of radical tendencies, Louis-Philippe, of the House of Orléans. Charles's daughter, the *Duchesse de Berri,* in vain attempted to start a counter-revolution in northeastern France, but was captured and for some time held prisoner by Louis-Philippe.

The duchess, throughout the events culminating in the July revolution of 1830, is consumed with anxiety lest her son, Fédor, should become involved. He is a student at the École Polytechnique in Paris, a state institution for training in higher mathematics and engineering, which provided the army with engineers and artillery officers, yet even under Napoleon retained its republican sympathies. But Fédor, on the grounds of his mother's ill-health, is persuaded to leave Paris without being engaged in the fray.

ONE

Carville

I FIND we are unjust to the landscapes of that lovely Normandy where each of us could be spending the night this very evening. Switzerland has all the praise; yet its mountains have to be bought with three days of boredom, the annoyance of the customs, and passports loaded with visas. But we are hardly in Normandy before our gaze, weary of the symmetry of Paris and its white walls, is welcomed by an ocean of greenery.

The sad grey plains remain towards Paris; the road enters a succession of valleys and high hills, whose tops, thick with trees, are outlined against the sky not without a certain boldness, bounding the horizon in a manner that gives play to the imagination—a novel pleasure indeed for the inhabitant of Paris.

As we advance, we perceive the sea to the right, between the trees with which the country is covered—the sea, without which no landscape can claim perfection.

If the eye, which the charm of distance awakens to

the beauties of landscape, seeks for details, it discovers that every cluster of trees forms a kind of enclosure surrounded by walls of earth; these embankments, constructed regularly along the edge of all the fields, are crowned with a serried row of young elms.

The view I have described is precisely the one revealed on coming from Paris and approaching the sea, at two leagues from Carville. This is a large village where was enacted, a few years ago, the episode of the Duchesse de Miossens and Doctor Sansfin.

In the direction of Paris, the first houses of the village, hidden amid apple trees, lie along the bottom of the valley; but at two hundred paces beyond the last ones, whose view stretches from the northwest towards the sea and Mont Saint-Michel, one crosses, on a brand-new bridge, over a pretty stream of clear water which has the sense to flow very rapidly, for everything has sense in Normandy and nothing is done without its *wherefore,* and often a wherefore very sharply calculated. That is not what endears Carville to me, and on going there to pass the month when the partridges are about, I remember wishing I was ignorant of the French language. I, the son of a notary far from rich, was going to quarter myself in the castle of Mme. d'Albret de Miossens, wife of the former lord of the manor, who had returned to France only in 1814. That was a great claim to honor towards 1820.

The village of Carville stretches out between the meadows in a valley almost parallel to the sea, which

is visible as soon as one ascends a few feet. This very pleasant valley is dominated by the castle; but it was only during the day that my spirit could respond to the quiet beauties of the landscape. In the evening—and an evening which began with the dinner bell at five o'clock—it was necessary to pay court to the Duchesse de Miossens, who was not the woman to let her rights be prescribed. Mme. de Miossens was only thirty and never lost sight of the extremely important fact of her rank; also, in Paris, she practiced her devotions, and the Faubourg Saint-Germain willingly gave her the direction of its bazaars and alms-gatherings. As far as that goes, it was the sole homage which the Faubourg consented to render her. Married at sixteen to an old man who was to make her a duchess—this old man, the Marquis d'Albret, did not lose his father until the Duchesse de Miossens reached her twenty-eighth year—she had to exhaust all her youth in longing for the honors that a duchess still received in society during the time of Charles X. Nor was she particularly intelligent.

Such was the great lady in whose house I passed the month of September, on condition that I interested myself from five o'clock to midnight in the gossip and little happenings of Carville. It is a place that will not be found on the map, and I claim permission to relate horrors—that is to say, part of the truth. The tricks and sordid calculations of these Normans were hardly a relaxation from the complicated life of Paris.

I was the guest of Mme. de Miossens on account of

being son and grandson of the worthy MM. Lagier, from time immemorial notaries to the Albret de Miossens family, or rather to the Miossens family which pretended to be Albrets.

There was splendid shooting on this domain, and it was well protected. The husband of the mistress of the house, a peer of France, member of the Order of Saint Louis and a devout Catholic, never left the court of Charles X; and the only son, Fédor de Miossens, was still a schoolboy. As for me, a happy shot with my gun made up for anything. In the evening, I had to bear with the Abbé Du Saillard, an important official of the Catholic mission and charged with keeping an eye on the curés of the neighborhood. His character, as deep as that of Tacitus, bored me; it was not of a sort to which, at that time, I cared to devote attention. M. Du Saillard supplied seven or eight minor gentry of the region with ideas on the events announced in the *Quotidienne*.

From time to time there appeared a most amusing hunchback in Mme. de Miossens's drawing room. I found him very entertaining; it was his ambition to be a successful lover, and sometimes, I understood, he achieved it.

Doctor Sansfin was the name of this eccentric, and in 1830 he might have been twenty-five or twenty-six.

Had he not yearned to be a Don Juan, this doctor would have been tolerable. The only son of a rich farmer in the district, Sansfin had become a doctor in order to minister to himself. He had made himself a

sportsman in order to appear always armed to the villagers who might have been tempted to make fun of him. He was allied with the deep Abbé Du Saillard so as to have a semblance of power in the countryside.

The doctor would have been less ridiculous had he been tailored and garbed like everyone else; but it was known that he got his clothes from Paris and, with a pretension really impossible in a Normandy village, he had a servant who was *a barber from the capital.* Yet he objected to being laughed at!

Thus the doctor possessed a head adorned with a magnificent black beard, much too ample and arranged with infinite care. Such a head would not have been unseemly were it not that, as in Béranger's song, a body was lacking to it. It was the cause of Sansfin's partiality to the theatre. In the front seat of a box, he appeared as a man like another; but when he got up, or allowed the sight of his shrunken little body attired in the latest fashion, the effect was irresistible.

"Look at that frog!" would come a cry from the pit.

What a word for a fellow who was a success with the ladies!

One evening we were inscribing in the ashes on the hearth—you note the extremity of our *unoccupation*—the initials of the women who had made us commit the idiocies most humiliating to our self-respect. I remember that it was I who invented this proof of love. The Vicomte de Sainte-Foi drew an M and a B; then the duchess, without derogating from

her air of haughtiness, demanded of him all he could possibly recount of a young man's follies performed for the sake of M and B. An old chevalier of Saint Louis, M. de Malivert, wrote A and E; then, after relating all he could, he handed over the tongs to Dr. Sansfin. A smile formed on all our lips, but the doctor proudly wrote D, C, J, F.

"What! You are so much younger than I, and yet you have four initials inscribed on your heart?" exclaimed the Chevalier Malivert, whose age allowed him the privilege of laughing a little.

"Since Mme. la Duchesse has exacted the vow of sincerity from our obedience," the hunchback gravely replied, "I am compelled to put four letters."

For three hours since finishing an excellent dinner composed of early vegetables brought from Paris by the duchess's footmen, we had sat there to the number of eight or ten, uneasily laboring to sustain a languishing conversation. At the doctor's answer all our eyes lit up with joy, and we gathered closer round the hearth.

At the first words, the hunchback's carefully chosen phrases made us laugh, so odd was his seriousness. To complete our mirth, the fair D, C, J and F had all loved him passionately.

Mme. de Miossens, herself dying to laugh, made us sign upon sign to curb our gaiety.

"You'll kill the goose that lays the golden eggs," said she to M. de Sainte-Foi, who was placed at her side. "Pass the word, 'Moderation, gentlemen!' "

The doctor was so busied with his thoughts that nothing could rouse him. I believe he was inventing the details of a romance prepared beforehand, in whose relation he exulted. What he lacked, as indeed he proved later on, when fortune came knocking at his door, was an ounce of common sense. This evening the good doctor narrated to us not only his conquests, but also the detail of the sentiments and shadows of sentiments which had dictated the actions of the unfortunate D, C, J and F, who were frequently neglected by their conqueror.

The Vicomte de Sainte-Foi had the inspiration to call the doctor the Marquis de Caraccioli, in memory of the ambassador of the Two Sicilies whom Louis XVI asked:

"Do you make love in Paris, my dear Ambassador?"

"No, sire, I buy it ready-made."

Mme. de Miossens, once her haughtiness was forgotten, had delightful manners and was perfectly happy when she was made to laugh. She enjoyed the gaiety of others, but, to tell the truth, the haughtiness opposed her allowing anything from which gaiety could arise.

This duchess had such admirable manners and so gentle a perfection that, although it was the shooting which brought me two or three times a year to the castle of Carville, for the first two days her way of behaving always cast its spell on me and I believed her capable of ideas. She had, however, only the perfection of society jargon. What amused me and saved

me from the stupidity of taking the house seriously, was that the duchess could not be reproached for a single just notion; she saw everything from a duchess's point of view, and still more that of a duchess whose ancestors were crusaders.

The revolution of 1789, and Voltaire, were not hateful to her, they were things that had not happened. This absurdity was pursued to the minutest detail, and her habit, for instance, of calling the mayor of Carville "Sheriff" consoled me for all my twenty-two years and prevented my taking seriously any of the impertinences which swarmed in the castle and put the neighbors to flight. The duchess could only gather ten people to her table by paying ten francs a head to her cook, besides the enormous wages and all the accounts a cook is usually paid.

At heart, Mme. de Miossens was bitterly bored; the man she detested the most, as an infamous radical, was happy and reigning in Paris. That radical was none other than the amiable academician generally known under the name of Louis XVIII.

Engulfed in this country life wherein she had cast herself through disgust with Paris, the duchess had no other distraction than the gossip of the village of Carville, in which she was most exactly instructed by one of her housemaids, Mlle. Pierrette, who had a lover in the village. What amused me was, that Pierrette's stories utilized the clearest terms, words of an energy very pleasant to see tolerated by a lady whose

language was the model of a delicacy often exaggerated.

Thus I was rather bored at the castle of Carville when there arrived a Catholic mission directed by a man of great eloquence, the Abbé Le Cloud, who, from our first meeting, made my conquest.

The mission was a real stroke of luck for the duchess who every evening had twenty people to supper. At these suppers miracles were a frequent topic. The Comtesse de Sainte-Foi and twenty other ladies of the district, whom I saw at the castle each evening, mentioned me to the Abbé Le Cloud as a man of whom something might be made. I noticed that these very noble and right-thinking ladies hardly believed in miracles, while giving them the protection of their influence. I did not miss a single discourse from the abbé. Soon, bored with the insipidities he had to deliver to the local inhabitants, he showed me his friendship; and as he was far from sharing the Abbé Du Saillard's prudence, he once remarked:

"You've got a splendid voice; you know Latin well; your family will leave you six thousand francs at the most. Why don't you join us?"

I reflected a good deal on this proposition, for which there was something to be said. Had the mission continued a month longer at Carville, I believe I should have enlisted for a year in the abbé's troop.

I reckoned I should economize enough to return and have a good year in Paris and, as I was horrified at the thought of scandal, on returning to Paris recom-

mended by the Abbé Le Cloud, I ought to be able to snatch a subprefect's place, which at that time I should have esteemed a rare piece of fortune. If by chance I found real pleasure in improvising from the pulpit like the Abbé Le Cloud, I would follow that trade.

TWO

The Mission

On the last day of the mission held at Carville, the nobles afraid of 1793, and the newly rich bourgeois trying to be fashionable, vied at filling the village's pretty little Gothic church; but all the faithful had not been able to find room there. A thousand or perhaps twelve hundred remained in the cemetery surrounding it. The church doors had been taken off by order of M. Du Saillard, and from time to time a few bursts of voice from the missionary occupying the pulpit reached this impatient and half-silent crowd.

Two of those gentlemen had already made their appearance. The light was beginning to fade; it was a mournful, end-of-October day. A choir of sixty pious young girls, assembled and drilled by the Abbé Le Cloud, sang a choice of anthems.

Night had altogether fallen by the time they ended. Thereupon the Abbé Le Cloud eagerly reascended the pulpit to deliver a word of exhortation. At his first words the crowd in the cemetery pressed round the doorway and the low church windows, of which more than one piece of glass perished at that moment. A

religious silence reigned over the crowd; all wished to hear so famous a preacher.

M. Le Cloud spoke that evening in the style of a novel by Mrs. Radcliffe. He *performed* a terrifying description of hell. His menacing phrases rang down the dark Gothic aisles, for care had been taken not to light the lamps. M. Hautemare, the verger, had said at dusk that his henchmen could not elbow themselves a way through the midst of that tightly packed crowd, so grimly did everyone stick to his place.

Nobody breathed. M. Le Cloud cried that the Devil is always present everywhere and even in the holiest places; he tries to drag the faithful with him into his burning sulphur.

Suddenly M. Le Cloud interrupts himself, and shouts in terror and with an anguished voice:

"Hell, my brethren!"

It is impossible to paint the effect of those drawn-out words, echoing through a church almost entirely in darkness and crammed with the faithful all making the sign of the Cross! Even I was impressed. The Abbé Le Cloud gazed at the altar and seemed impatient. He repeated, with irritation in his tone:

"Hell, my brethren!"

Twenty flares exploded behind the altar; a red and infernal light illuminated those pallid faces, and certainly at that moment nobody felt bored. More than forty women heeled over on their neighbors, so thoroughly had they fainted.

Mme. Hautemare, the verger's wife, was among

those who swooned most profoundly, and as she could aspire to the first rank among the devout of the village, everybody bustled round her. Twenty little boys darted off to tell the verger, but he angrily sent them away. His duty forbade his hurrying to the scene; he was extremely busy, collecting the least fragments of the flares' covers, made with string and canvas coated with pitch.

This task had been given him and several times explained by the terrible M. Du Saillard, the village curé, and Hautemare was scrupulous in fulfilling it. The curé was the chief author of his little fortune and the verger trembled merely to see him frown.

M. Du Saillard, inspecting his flock from the organ loft, having seen that all went well and that nobody uttered the word "flare," went out to the cemetery. I think he was a little jealous of the Abbé Le Cloud's huge success. That missionary had not, like the curé, the art of appropriate punishment and reward, and of dominating every will; but in compensation he had an oratorical facility which the latter never approached. The curé would not admit to himself this inferiority. Seeing so many people grouped in the cemetery, he could not resist the temptation to mount the pedestal of the cross and himself also address his parishioners. What struck me in his discourse was that he hesitated to give the name of *miracle* to what had just happened. It was one of those occurrences, he said, which cannot frankly be called miraculous until six months after they have taken place. As he spoke, he

listened to hear if anyone breathed a word of flares or mummeries unworthy of the holy place. This division of his mind did not tend to increase the fire of inspiration which was naturally absent from his discourse. The curé became annoyed and began to single out the impious among his audience; at that, his speech borrowed passion from the ardor of his wrath. His inflamed eyes lingered especially on three persons among the good women in the cemetery.

The wretched Pernin, a consumptive figure, was looking at the curé in a manner he found disquieting. He was an unhappy pale young man who had been dismissed from a royal college, where he was professor of mathematics, because the college chaplain had asserted that a geometrician could not believe in God. Having retired to the village, where he lived with his poverty-stricken mother, he took a few children to instruct in the rudiments, and when any of the urchins showed ability, he taught them geometry for nothing.

The irritable curé shuddered on meeting Dr. Sansfin's gaze, which was bold in a different way. In affirming a cautious opposition, Sansfin wrung infinite concessions from him. The curé found the doctor much too independent and, in my opinion, tried to have him considered a partner in some of the conspiracies that were then rousing much attention. The curé thought him capable of anything to make the girls whom he had the impudence to woo forget his hump: "Such a fellow," he said to himself, "is very likely to pronounce the impious word 'flares,' and at

such a moment as this, a word of that kind would spoil everything. In a month we can laugh at it."

His rage reached its height on encountering, six paces before him, the astonished rather than ironical look of a young schoolboy from Paris—young Fédor, the Duchess de Moissens's only son. "This little ruffian, who arrived last evening," thought the curé, "is being educated in Paris, and nothing good ever comes out of that capital of irony. What is this child doing here? The place of honor granted to his family is close to the altar; he is bright enough to have noticed the train of powder that set off the flares, and if he says a word, these stupid peasants, who worship his family, will repeat it like an oracle."

All these reflections ended by confusing the curé's eloquence so much that he saw the women crowding out of the cemetery, and was obliged to cut short his homily for fear of being deserted.

An hour later I found this terrible curé making a shocking scene with a young abbé named Lamairette, Fédor's tutor, asking him bitterly why he had separated from his pupil in church.

"It is rather he who left me, sir," the poor abbé timidly answered. "I looked for him everywhere, and he, who must have seen me, did all he could to dodge me."

The Abbé Du Saillard sharply scolded the poor young priest, and ended by threatening him with the unpleasant anger of the duchess.

"You'll take my livelihood away," poor Lamairette

replied humbly, "but really, what with your blame and the duchess's, I don't know which way to look. Is it my fault if the little count, whose valet keeps on telling him that he'll be a duke, and immensely rich, is a mischievous child whose vanity all goes to teasing me?"

I liked this answer, and went off to tell it to the duchess, who laughed over it.

"I'd almost prefer to go back to my father, the doorkeeper at the Miossens house in Paris, and limit my ambition to applying for his place," said Lamairette.

"That isn't half impertinent and Jacobin," cried Du Saillard, "and what makes you think you'll get his place if I report against you?"

"The duke honors me with his protection."

The little abbé had tears in his eyes and was hard put to hide his emotion from his terrible colleague. Fédor had come for a fortnight to breathe the pure air of Calvados. This child, whose intelligence it was hoped to form, had eight tutors, who each gave him a lesson a day, and was in poor health. He nevertheless went back to Paris two days after the miracle of the flares, with the result that this thin, puny heir to so fine a domain spent only three nights in his ancestors' magnificent castle. Du Saillard had the credit for this, which greatly diverted the Abbé Le Cloud and myself.

Du Saillard worked hard to make the duchess condescend to do his will. Several times he was obliged to invoke the cause of the Church in general. He found her always angry—she had been extremely frightened

by the flares; she had believed that a revolt of the united Jacobins and Bonapartists was about to start. But on returning to the castle she had a very different reason to be vexed. In her first moment of terror at the flares she had disarranged a coil of false hair intended to conceal some grey locks, and for an hour she had been seen in that condition by all the peasants of the village and by her own servants, whom above all she wished to deceive.

"Why didn't you let me into the secret?" she kept repeating to the Abbé Du Saillard. "Must things be done in my own village without my knowing it? Do the clergy want to begin their mad struggle with the nobility again?"

It was a far cry from this degree of anger to packing poor Fédor off to Paris, when he was so pale and so happy to run about in the garden and look at the sea. However, Du Saillard had the upper hand. Sorrowfully the child departed, and the Abbé Le Cloud remarked:

"This Du Saillard doesn't know how to speak, but he can govern the humble and reduce the mighty. Each of these gifts is well worth the other."

While the castle was busy getting Fédor away, Mme. Hautemare, the verger's wife, was having serious discussions with her husband, and these discussions, faithfully reported to the duchess, kept her amused and made her forget that her son was leaving.

M. Hautemare held three offices, all depending on the Church. He was verger, choirmaster and school-

master, and these three places brought him as much as sixty francs a month; but since the second year of Louis XVIII's reign in Paris, the curé and the Duchesse de Miossens had managed to get him authorized to open a school for the children of right-thinking laborers. The Hautemares had been able to put aside first twenty, then forty, then sixty francs a month, and were becoming rich. Choirmaster Hautemare, good fellow though he was, had revealed to Mme. de Miossens the name of an evil-doing peasant and Jacobin who dared to kill all the rabbits in the neighborhood. Now, the duchess firmly believed that these rabbits belonged to the House of Miossens, and considered their slaying a personal injury.

This denunciation had made the fortune of the verger and his school. The duchess desired that a distribution of prizes should take place in the large hall of the castle, richly hung with tapestries and arranged with first- and second-class seats. To the former her bailiff invited the young scholars' mothers who were wives of peasants owning their own land, while the wives of peasants who rented theirs were invited only to the latter. Nothing more was needed to increase to sixty the number of the verger's pupils, which until then had amounted to but eight or ten. The wealth of the Hautemares was in consequence augmented, and it was not altogether ridiculous for Mme. Hautemare, after supper, on the evening of the Day of Flares, to say to her husband:

"Did you notice what the Abbé Le Cloud said at the

end of his *word of exhortation* on the duty of the rich? They ought, as far as is in their power, to *give a soul to God.* Well," added Mme. Hautemare, "those words disturb me. God has not granted us children; we are laying away a nice bit of money; who will get it after us? Will it be used in an edifying manner? Whose fault will it be if this money falls into the hands of unbelievers—I mean, into the hands of your nephew, that impious fellow who in 1815 belonged to the regiment of brigands called the Free Corps, raised against the Prussians? It's even said, though I don't want to believe it, that he killed a Prussian."

"No, no, that's not true," cried the good Hautemare. "Kill an ally of our King Louis the Desired! My nephew's a scamp; sometimes he blasphemes when he's drunk; he misses Mass often enough, but he hasn't killed a Prussian."

Mme. Hautemare let her husband ramble for an hour on this subject, without making him the alms of an idea. The conversation languished. Then she added:

"It would be a good plan if I adopted a little girl, quite a little one, and we'll bring her up in the fear of God. That would truly be *giving Him a soul,* and she can look after us in our old age."

Her husband seemed deeply stirred by this idea: it was a matter of disinheriting his nephew, Guillaume Hautemare, who bore his own name. He protested vigorously, then added in a timid voice:

"If, at any rate, we adopted little Yvonne"—the

nephew's youngest daughter—"it would frighten her father, and he wouldn't stay away from Mass any more."

"The child won't be ours. After a year, if he sees we're fond of it the Jacobin will threaten to take it back; then the tables will be turned. It will be your nephew, the Jacobin of 1815, who'll be master. We shall have to sacrifice some of our money to be sure the little girl can't be taken from us."

The couple of Normans were tormented by the scheme for six months, and at last, armed with a letter of recommendation from the Abbé Du Saillard, in which he was given the title of *Provost,* the good Hautemare, accompanied by his wife, presented themselves at the Foundlings' Hospital in Rouen, where they made choice of a little girl aged four, duly vaccinated and already very well-behaved: it was Lamiel.

Although they averred, on their return to Carville, that little Amable Miel was one of their nieces, born near Orléans, the daughter of a cousin named Miel, a carpenter by trade, the Normans of the village were not deceived, and Sansfin, the hunchback doctor, said that Lamiel was born of the fright the Devil gave them on the Day of Flares.

There are decent people everywhere, even in Normandy where, if the truth be told, they are less frequent than in other parts. The decent people in Carville were indignant at Hautemare's nephew, who had seven children, being disinherited in so barba-

rous a fashion. They called Lamiel *the Devil's daughter*. Mme. Hautemare came with tears in her eyes to ask the curé whether such a name would not bring ill-luck; the curé, in a rage, replied that her anxiety in the matter might well plant her in hell. He added that he meant to take little Lamiel under his direct protection, and a week later, the Duchesse de Miossens and he announced that Hautemare was to have two classes of pupils. The duchess had three benches in the verger's school covered with old scraps of tapestry. The children who sat on these benches would be raised to the first class, while those on the bare benches would be in the second. The children of the first class were to pay five francs instead of the previous four, and Mlle. Anselme, the duchess's head maid, confided to two or three intimate friends that, for the distribution of prizes, her mistress intended to invite the mothers of first-class children to the front seats, even though they were only wives of tenant farmers. Six months later nearly all the benches in the school had to be covered.

The Hautemares, who were now becoming rich, demand rather more detailed mention as to their character. The best and the most meticulously devout of men, Hautemare bestowed all his attention on the care of the church, with which he was charged. If a wooden vase holding artificial flowers was not placed on the altar in precise symmetry, he believed that the Mass lost its effect, and ran to confess his grave sin to the curé, Du Saillard, while the Monday after, the

narrative of the event provided the Duchesse de Miossens with her entire conversation. Bored with Paris, where she no longer counted as a beauty, she was almost permanently at Carville, where for all her company she had little more than her maids and the curé, Du Saillard; and he, tired of her society and afraid of making some indiscreet remark, presented himself only for brief moments. But on Sundays, at High Mass, he flattered Mme. de Miossens with a swing of the censer at intervals, and each Monday Hautemare had the honor of taking to the castle the huge chunk of consecrated bread which on the previous evening had been presented at the seigneurial pew occupied by the duchess. She attached much importance to this fragment of loaf, a conspicuous but almost sole relic of the homage that the House of Miossens had received for more than four centuries in the church of their village.

The duchess gave the verger a special welcome; when he came to bring the consecrated bread, the *valet de chambre* armed himself with his sword and opened both wings of the drawing room door, for on such occasions the verger was the curé's official envoy, fulfilling his office in regard to a person exercising manorial rights. Before leaving the castle Hautemare went down to the kitchen, where he found a kind of luncheon-dinner prepared for him. The worthy schoolmaster then returned to the village, telling all the peasants whom he met on the way, and afterwards his wife and his niece Lamiel,

the particulars of the dishes he had at his meal, followed by every remark which Madame had condescended to address to him. In the evening the excellent pair discussed at leisure the best way of distributing the alms with which the great lady had charged him. This trust on the part of the duchess, along with the credit which twenty years of attention and passive obedience had gained him with the curé Du Saillard—a terrible person when in anger—had made the good schoolmaster a most important personage—perhaps the most important in the village of Carville. It might even be said that his reputation extended over the whole district of Avranches, where he rendered many services. Mme. Hautemare, on her side, haughty to the peasants and leading her husband by the nose, was, if anything, more narrow-mindedly devout; to Lamiel she spoke of nothing but duties and sins.

I was so heartily bored at Carville, when I was not slaughtering the duchess's rabbits, that in the evenings I concentrated all my attention on the lengthy particulars which I have myself recounted in a somewhat lengthy manner.

If the reader permits, I will tell him the reason for my verbiage. I absorbed all these details in company with the amiable Abbé Le Cloud, whom an affection of the chest, contracted as a result of fervid shouting in damp churches, retained for some months at the castle of Carville, and I write this in 1840, twenty-two years after.

In 1818, it was my good luck to possess one of those uncles in America so frequent in light comedy. By name Des Perriers, he passed as the black sheep of the family. I had communicated with him two or three times, to send him clothes and books from Paris.

At the period when I and Abbé Le Cloud used to laugh over the worthy Hautemare's pomposity and the terror which the curé Du Saillard inspired in him, my American uncle decided to die and leave me a little fortune in Havana, along with a very big lawsuit.

"It's a position," said the charming Abbé Le Cloud. "You'll become a litigant and a planter."

I won my lawsuit in 1824, and led the heavenly existence of a rich planter. At the end of five years, the desire to be a man of wealth in Paris came over me. Curiosity incited me to discover news of Carville, of the duchess and her son, and the Hautemares. All these tidings—for there were some—turn around little Lamiel, whom the Hautemares adopted, and I have had the fancy to write them down, in order to become a man of letters.

So, benevolent reader, farewell! You will hear of me no more.

THREE

The Washerwomen

On leaving Carville in the direction of the sea, one finds on the left the little valley along whose depth runs the Houblon, that stream which has the good sense to be pretty. Five large meadows, sloping steeply, clothe the stream's two sides.

On the left bank a fine road, recently repaired by Mme. de Miossens, proudly displays its little posts of cut stone which, under a very impolite name, are intended to prevent careless persons from falling into the swiftly running water, which is here more than ten feet below. On the advice of the curé Du Saillard, the noble lady has made herself arbitrator as to the repairs of this road leading to the castle, the cost of which is rated at three hundred francs in the communal budget. The Duchesse de Miossens as *arbitrator* receiving three hundred francs from a *commune!* What ridiculous terms in 1826, for that is about the date at which our extremely immoral history begins.

Ten minutes' walk from the bridge over the Houblon, a third meadow rises up in front and dominates the junction of the Houblon and the

Décise. The Décise, which plunges rapidly down, is skirted by a track which runs in zigzags over the highest part of this third meadow. The eye of the traveller is caught as he mounts by the last little sanded walks of a very well-kept garden in the English style, and above them the tops of some shrubs intended mainly to hide the view of the distant sea from the ground-floor windows of the castle.

The square black stones of a Gothic tower make a fine contrast in color. This tower, now entirely a ruin, was a noble contemporary of William the Conqueror.

Quite at the bottom of the third meadow is a public washing place, established on the bank of the Décise under a huge lime tree. This basin, which the duchess greatly hopes to abolish, is formed by two enormous hollowed-out trunks of oaks with flat stones paving their edge.

About thirty women were washing their linen at this basin on the last day of the month of September. Several of them, well-to-do peasants of prosperous Normandy, were hardly working; they were there under the pretext of superintending their maids' exertions, but actually for the sake of joining in the conversation, which on that day was very animated. Some of the women were tall and well-made, built like the Diana of the Tuileries, and their faces, of a shapely oval, would have passed for fair enough, had they not been surmounted by the horrible cotton bonnet whose tassel, as they bent over, hung right down in front of them.

"Look! Isn't that our dear doctor, riding his famous Mutton?" cried one of the laundresses.

"And poor Mutton carries double weight: he has to bear both the doctor and his hump, and that's no trifle," answered her neighbor.

They all raised their heads and stopped work.

The very singular object which attracted their gaze, with a gun propped on his hump, was no other than our friend Sansfin.

And, indeed, it would have been hard for the younger girls to see him pass without laughing.

The hunchback showed that he was extremely annoyed, which amused them all the more.

He went down the narrow track following the course of the Décise. This stream formed a cascade, and the track, kept firm by a large number of stakes stuck in the ground, described a series of zigzags. It was these zigzags which the unhappy doctor was descending under the fire of thirty screeching voices.

"Look out for your hump, doctor. It might come off and roll down, and crush us poor washerwomen!"

"Beasts! Filthy beasts!" snarled the doctor between his teeth. "What vile brutes the people are! And to think that I never take a ha'penny from all those hussies when Providence avenges me by sending them some good disease!"

"Silence, women!" shouted the doctor, descending the zigzags more slowly than he could have wished. How it would have swelled the washerwomen's mirth if his horse Mutton had slipped!

"Silence, women! Get on with your washing!"

"Be careful, doctor, mind you don't fall! If Mutton throws you, we shan't dally, we'll have your hump!"

"And what'll I take from you? In any case, it won't be your virtue! That's been running the fields for many a fine day! You've got lumps often enough, but they aren't at your back!"

(Mme. Hautemare arrives.)[1]

This woman had a solemn air and was leading by the hand a little girl between twelve and fourteen years old, who seemed in her liveliness very vexed at being thus restrained.

It was none other than Mme. Hautemare, wife of the verger, choirmaster and schoolmaster of Carville, and the little girl, whose vivacity she was checking, was her *niece,* Lamiel.

Now, the washerwomen were shocked at the *lady-like manner* which Mme. Hautemare allowed herself —leading the child *by the hand,* instead of letting her skip about like the other little girls in the village!

Mme. Hautemare was coming from the castle by the fine road which went round the meadow on the right of the Houblon.

"Ah, here comes *Madame* Hautemare!" cried the washerwomen.

But they knew that *The* Hautemare would do battle with them later, while in a quarter of a minute the doctor would be gone; besides, the doctor, because of his pent-in exasperation, was more amusing.

[1] Here a short gap in the manuscript.

His horse Mutton, which had reached the bottom of the zigzags of the Décise, was drinking the stream, a little above the washing place.

Two of the women called out, addressing themselves to Mme. Hautemare:

"Hello, hello, *Madame,* mind you don't lose *your brother's daughter,* that pretended niece of yours!"

"Take care of your wig, little hunchback, perhaps your *hairdresser* won't know how to trim it!"

"And you . . ." retorted the doctor; but his reply was of such a nature that it is impossible to write it down.

The pious Mme. Hautemare, who had continued to follow the road in its descent from the castle until it ran beside the washing place, quickly began to retrace her steps with her niece. This maneuver, accompanied with the distinct air of disdain which the verger's wife assumed, roused a unanimous, universal burst of laughter around the basin.

The explosion of laughter was interrupted by the doctor, who, forcing his sharp little voice, cried:

"Be quiet, creatures! or I'll make my horse trot in the mud all round you, and soon your white bonnets and your faces will be as clean as your consciences, that's to say full of black mud and as putrid as your filthy bodies!"

While he made this gentlemanly speech, the doctor was stung to the quick and as red as a cock. For with this man, who passed his life thinking about his behavior, vanity brought out strange follies; he had a

clear view of his blunders, but rarely the strength to resist them. For instance, at that moment all he needed to do was to keep silence, and the insolent gabble of the washerwomen would have evaporated at Mme. Hautemare's expense; but just then he wanted his revenge.

"All right!" answered one of the women. "We're silly creatures and a brute's going to cover us with mud; a little water will soon wash it off. But what water can clean a hunchback who's so foul that he can't find a mistress without paying for one?"

She had hardly finished before the doctor, in a frenzy, spurred his horse to a gallop and, in passing through the mire surrounding the basin, covered with mud all those red cheeks, all those white bonnets and —what was much worse—all that washed linen placed on the stone benches.

At this sight, the thirty washerwomen began howling insults with one voice, and their vigorous chorus lasted well over a minute.

The doctor was delighted at covering such insolent creatures with mud. "And they can't complain," he added with a diabolical grin.

He looked back to enjoy their discomfort. It was the moment when all in unison were launching atrocious insults at him. The doctor could not stand out against the temptation to ride through the mire once more. He put the spur to his horse. One of the women, who happened to be just under its nose, was seized with panic and hurled at it the little wooden

spade with which she beat her linen. This spade, thrown in fright, hurtled past the horse's eyes, which it missed by a few inches. In alarm, Mutton jibbed in the middle of his gallop, making a slight jump back.

This unforeseen sharp movement effected the doctor's separation from his saddle; and as he was leaning forward, he fell plump into the sludge, head first. It was a good six inches deep, and he had no further harm than shame, but the shame was complete.

He lay stretched at the feet of the woman who, in the agony of what she thought fearful danger, had flung the little wooden spade in front of her.

The women believed that the doctor had at least broken an arm. They all took flight so as not to be recognized and named when he brought an action.

He got up, quick as lightning, and remounted. Seeing him so nimbly in the saddle again, the women stopped short twenty paces away and began to laugh with a spontaneity, a violence, which raised the unhappy doctor's fury to boiling point. He seized his gun with tragic intention. But it had been roughly dropped on the ground in his fall, the locks were filled with mud and had lost their flints. The women, not knowing that the weapon was damaged and seeing the doctor take aim at them, resumed their flight, uttering shrill cries.

He, perceiving that his gun was in no state to avenge him, gave a terrible spurring to his horse, which reached the courtyard of his house in a few seconds. Swearing like a madman, without dismount-

ing, the doctor had a coat and gun brought to him, then sped at full gallop along the Avranches road, which passed over the bridge passing the Houblon, as already described.

The women, after washing their white bonnets, fell to getting the mudstains out of the linen.

For quite a quarter of an hour their talk sought a means of revenge upon the doctor without success. They were feeling vexed at being unable to devise a plan, when Mme. Hautemare returned, leading her niece Lamiel by the hand. At this sight, all the cries took a fresh direction.

"There she is again, that shrew, with her fine niece," shouted Pierrette.

"Who are you calling a niece? You mean the Devil's daughter."

"Who's the Devil's daughter? It's a bastard that she had behind her husband's back, and that she's forced the blockhead to adopt, so as to make him disinherit Guillaume Hautemare, his poor nephew."

"Ah, for pity's sake, neighbor, don't say anything so scandalous! At least have some consideration for the child with me!"

This plea, pronounced in a tone of heavy solemnity, was followed by a dozen replies at the same time, but which I cannot transcribe.

"Run off home, Lamiel!" cried Mme. Hautemare; and the little girl fled away, enchanted at being able to run. The worthy dame then had the gratification of delivering a sermon in three sections to the washer-

women, who, in despair of getting a word in, suddenly started to shout all together in the hope of making Mme. Hautemare move on. But the intrepid lady had their conversion at heart, and continued to preach for more than five minutes to the accompaniment of thirty screeching women.

Thanks to these two grand attacks on recalcitrant passers-by, the washerwomen found the secret of not being bored for the whole of that day. On her side, Mme. Hautemare had a long tale to tell her husband the verger and all her friends at Carville. The one who was least diverted was the doctor, who, instead of going home after covering the washerwomen with mud, rode swiftly to the bridge over the Houblon, without thinking of the absurd way in which the gun slung over his shoulder was flying up and down on his back.

"Good God!" he exclaimed to himself, "what a first-class fool I am, to let my nose be put out of joint by those hussies! There are some days when I ought to make my servant tie me up to the foot of my bed."

To shake off his ill-humor he tried to remember whether, on the high road along which he kept up his gallop, he could not find a patient good-hearted enough to believe that the doctor had come out to pay him an evening visit.

Suddenly he found something better than a patient. M. Du Saillard, the curé of Carville, had gone to dine that day at the Saint-Prise mansion, three leagues distant from the village. This curé was terrible in his

hates, and one of the bigwigs of the Catholic revival; but to compensate—and what saves civilization in France is, that there is compensation for everything—to compensate, then, the terrible Du Saillard did not like to be alone on the high road in his little gig.

Thus it was with the greatest satisfaction that he saw Sansfin arrive at the house. The two men might have done each other a good deal of harm, but they lived sensibly side by side. It was above all in regard to the Duchesse de Miossens that Du Saillard feared the malicious anecdotes which the doctor was such an adept at telling.

The doctor, on horseback, escorted the curé; but when he was back at home and alone, his gloom returned with the evening's memories. A moment later came consolation. He was called out to a handsome young man of five foot six, only just twenty-five years old, who had been stricken with a good and thorough apoplexy. The doctor passed the night with him and, in the course of applying the necessary treatment, had the pleasure of seeing so fine a creature expire at the break of day.

"There is a beautiful body left vacant," he said to himself. "Why cannot my soul enter it?"

The doctor, an only son of a farmer enriched by the purchase of nationalized property, had studied medicine in order to treat himself. He had made himself a good shot that he might appear always armed in front of scoffers. The reward of what often amounted to painful activity in his poor health was

to see the death of good-looking men, and to frighten the few pretty female patients that the locality provided.

The little niece, Lamiel, was too wide-awake not to understand, when her aunt, Mme. Hautemare, sent her off to the village, that something most extraordinary had occurred. The pious Mme. Hautemare never let her go twenty paces by herself.

Her first thought, naturally, was to find out what her aunt wanted to conceal from her; for that, it sufficed to take a turning and go back to hide on the tree-covered embankment which dominated the public washing place. But it occurred to Lamiel that she would be listening to insults and coarse words, which she held in horror.

A much more inviting idea came to her.

"If I run hard," she said to herself, "I can reach the field where they dance, where I have been only once in my life, and I can be back in the house before my aunt."

Carville consisted of hardly more than one very wide street with a square in the middle. At the opposite extremity to the bridge over the Houblon, that is to say, in the direction of Paris, stood the pretty Gothic church of the parish; beyond, lay the cemetery; then, still further, were three great lime trees under which dancing took place on Sundays, to the great displeasure of the curé Du Saillard. It was a profanation of the ashes of the dead, he declared, on the pre-

text that the trees were not more than forty feet from the cemetery. The cottage, which the commune had made over to M. Hautemare in his capacity of schoolmaster, gave on the street, almost opposite the cemetery, and from there one could see the gathering under the limes and hear the fiddles at the dance.

Lamiel ran down an old path, which led from the washing place to the Paris road outside Carville.

This path led towards the limes, whose leafy tops rose above the houses, and her heart was beating when she reached the road. "I am going to see those lovely trees from near-to!" she said to herself.

Lamiel thought that if she did not pass through the village, she would run no risk of being betrayed to her aunt by some pious woman who lived next door to the schoolmaster.

As she ran along the old lane outside Carville, she unfortunately encountered four or five old village wives, carrying baskets full of wooden clogs.

At one time Mme. Hautemare was as poor as they, and worked at the same trade for a livelihood. The curé Du Saillard's protection had changed everything. The women, who were walking barefoot, carrying their clogs on their heads, soon noticed that Lamiel was much better dressed than usual; apparently Aunt Hautemare had been taking her to the castle to see the duchess.

"There you are, all stuck-up because you've been to the castle!" one of them exclaimed.

"I don't know what's stopping me," cried a second, "we'll take those fine shoes off you! Why shouldn't you go barefoot like the rest of us?"

Lamiel's courage did not desert her. She climbed up into the field which overhung the path by several feet. From there she retorted insult for insult upon her foes.

"You want to steal my nice shoes because there are five of you; but if you rob me, the captain of the gendarmes is my uncle's friend, and he'll put you in prison."

"Shut up, little serpent! Devil's daughter!"

At this, all five began shouting together, "Devil's daughter! Devil's daughter!"

"All the better if I am his daughter," she called back. "I'll never be ugly and croaking like you. My father the Devil will keep me happy!"

FOUR

Mandrin and Cartouche

By dint of saving, Lamiel's aunt and uncle contrived to collect a capital bringing in an income of eighteen hundred francs. They were therefore very content, but boredom was killing Lamiel, their pretty niece. Intelligence is precocious in Normandy. Although not quite twelve years old, she was already susceptible to boredom, which, at that age and when not the result of physical suffering, betokens the presence of the mind. Mme. Hautemare discovered a sin in Lamiel's least distraction. On Sunday, for example, not only was it forbidden to go and see the dancing under the big lime trees at the end of the cemetery, but it was forbidden also to sit in front of the door of the cottage which the commune had made over to the churchwarden, for from there the violins could be heard, a glimpse be caught of those accursed dances which turned the curé's complexion yellow. Lamiel shed tears of boredom. Good Aunt Hautemare gave her jam to calm her, and the little girl, who had a sweet tooth, could not regard her with dislike. On his side, Hautemare the schoolmaster, very scrupulous as to

his office, made her read for an hour every morning and evening.

"If the commune," he said to himself, "pays me to teach all the children to read, it is the more reason for teaching my own niece, since, after God, I am the cause of her coming here."

This continual reading was one of the little girl's tortures; but whenever the good schoolmaster saw her crying, he gave her a few coins to console her. In spite of this money, rapidly exchanged for little mannikins in gingerbread, Lamiel detested reading.

One Sunday, when spinning was not allowed and her aunt forbade her to look through the open door for fear she might see any headdresses bobbing in tune, she found on the bookshelf the *History of the Four Sons Aymon*. Its woodcut charmed her; then, the better to understand it, she cast her eyes, although with repugnance, on the book's first page; it interested her; she forgot being barred from going to watch the dance; soon she could only think of the Four Sons. . . . The book, seized by Hautemare from a libertine scholar, made incredible ravages in the little girl's mind. Lamiel pondered on those mighty heroes and their steed throughout the evening and the night. She decided that to walk in the cemetery by the side of the dancers, and give her arm to one of them, would be very different from being repressed and stopped from jumping up and down as she leant on the trembling arm of her old uncle. She read nearly all the schoolmaster's books with feverish pleasure,

though without understanding them very well; yet she enjoyed the fancies which they woke in her. On account of the loves of Dido, she devoured, for instance, an old verse translation of Virgil's *Aeneid,* an ancient volume bound in parchment and dated 1620. Any story was enough to interest her. When she had run through and attempted to understand all the schoolmaster's books except those in Latin, she took the oldest and ugliest to the village grocer, who exchanged them for half a pound of Corinth raisins and the history of *Mandrin the Great,* and later that of *Monsieur Cartouche.*

We regretfully confess that these narratives were not written with the highly ethical and virtuous tendency which our moral century everywhere instills. It is easy to note that the Académie Française and the Montyon prizes have not yet sanctioned this kind of literature; besides, it is not boring. Soon Lamiel dreamt only of M. Mandrin, M. Cartouche and the other heroes with whom these little books acquainted her. Their end, which always occurred on an elevated place in the presence of numerous spectators, seemed to her a noble one; did not the books praise their courage and their energy? One evening at supper Lamiel had the imprudence to speak of these great men to her uncle; horrified, he made the sign of the Cross.

"Hear this, Lamiel!" he cried. "The only great men are the saints."

"Who can have given you such shocking ideas?" exclaimed Mme. Hautemare.

And all through supper, the good man and his wife talked of nothing else in front of their niece but the extraordinary remarks she had just uttered. When the three of them returned thanks after the meal, the schoolmaster was careful to add a Pater to beg heaven to preserve his niece from thinking of Mandrin and Cartouche.

Lamiel was very averted, full of spirit and imagination; she was deeply impressed by this sort of expiatory ceremony.

"But why doesn't uncle want me to admire them?" she wondered, lying in bed unable to sleep.

Then, suddenly, this extremely criminal notion occurred to her:

"Would my uncle have given ten crowns, as Cartouche did, to that poor widow Renoart outside Valence, whose black cow had been carried off by the excisemen, and who had only a few ha'pence left—she and her seven children?"

For a quarter of an hour Lamiel wept with pity, then said to herself:

"Would my uncle, once he was on the scaffold, have been able to bear the blows of the iron mallet with which the executioner was breaking his arms, without in the least wincing, like M. Mandrin? My uncle groans forever if his gouty foot meets a stone."

That night a revolution took place in the little

girl's mind, and on the next day, she took to the grocer the old translation of Virgil with engravings. She refused figs and Corinth raisins for it, and received in exchange one of those thrilling chronicles she had just been told not to read.

It was Friday, the day after, when Mme. Hautemare fell into deep despair because in the evening, as she left the table, noticing that a certain earthenware bowl was empty, she realized that she had put into the soup the remains of Thursday's meat broth.

"Well, what's it matter?" said Lamiel frivolously. "It's made better soup, and perhaps the rest of the broth would have gone bad between now and Sunday."

You can guess whether the young niece was violently scolded by both uncle and aunt for giving vent to such atrocities. Her aunt was in a bad mood, and not knowing on what to fasten it, she passed on her temper, as they say at Carville, to her young relation. The little girl had already the sense not to pit her own anger against that of an excellent aunt, and one who gave her jam.

Besides, she saw her really in despair at having partaken of the remainder of the broth, and served it to others. Lamiel meditated deeply on that Friday supper. She was still thinking of it a month later when she heard Mme. Merlin, who kept the tavern, say to a customer:

"They're as good as gold, the Hautemares, but they're *idiots!*"

Now, Lamiel had the greatest regard for Mme. Merlin; she heard her laughing and singing in the tavern all day long, and even on Fridays.

"That explains everything," cried Lamiel. *"My uncle and aunt are idiots!"*

For a week she hardly spoke ten words, so greatly had the tavernkeeper's explanation disturbed her.

Nobody tells me these things yet, she thought, because I am too young; it is the same with love—they forbid me to speak of it, without ever wanting to tell me what it is.

After this vital incident of the remark made by Mme. Merlin, the vendor of cider, all Aunt Hautemare's admonitions, whether dealing with *real duty* or merely following the convention of the village devotees, were equally ridiculous in Lamiel's esteem. She muttered to herself:

"It's idiotic!"—to all that her aunt or uncle might say to her. Not to tell her beads on the eve of important festivals, not to fast on Ember days, or to go to the woods to make love, seemed to Lamiel sins of equal degree.

FIVE

A Reader

Thus Lamiel grew up; she was fifteen when wrinkles began to surround the eyes of the duchess (we have forgotten to say that on the old duke's death, his son only survived him a few months) who was in despair on perceiving them. A messenger sent in all haste to Paris brought back the best-known oculist, M. de la Rouze. On his consultation made next morning at the duchess's bedside, this very intelligent man was greatly embarrassed; he was compelled to roll off a long series of elegant phrases in order to gain time to invent a Greek word signifying weakness caused by old age. Let us assume this fine-sounding Greek word to be Amorphosis: M. de la Rouze explained at length to the duchess that her trouble, arising from a sudden cold in the head, usually attacked young women of twenty to twenty-five. He prescribed a severe treatment, gave the duchess two boxes of pills with very dissimilar names, but compounded of bread crumbs and colocynth, and above all put his patient well on her guard against calling in ignorant practitioners, who might confuse what was wrong with something

that needed debilitating treatment. He prescribed that she was not to read for six months, especially in the evening; it would therefore be necessary for her to engage a reader. But the doctor managed so well that it was the duchess who first pronounced the fatal word "Reader," and another more terrible still—"Spectacles." The oculist appeared to reflect profoundly, and ended by deciding that for the duration of the treatment, which might take six or eight months, it would not be harmful to spare the eyes and wear spectacles, which he undertook to choose in Paris at a very skilled optician's, puffed twice weekly in the newspapers.

The duchess was delighted with this charming doctor, chevalier of all the European Orders and not forty years old; he set out for Paris very well paid. But he left her considerably disturbed: where could she find a reader in the country? That kind of maidservant was very hard to find, even in Normandy. It was in vain that Mlle. Anselme made the duchess's need known in the village. The kindhearted Hautemare, the only male in the whole village who deserved the epithet, at first thought of applying for the place for his niece Lamiel.

But, he reflected, no one else in the village is capable of such employment, and the duchess has so much sense that she herself is sure to think of Lamiel.

Besides, there was a major objection: was a girl taken from a foundling hospital fit to serve as reader to so noble a lady?

For a fortnight Hautemare and his wife were plunged in the torment that a great plan gives in the course of its execution, when, on an evening which brought most decisive news of the events in La Vendée, the postman delivered at the castle the *Quotidienne* from Paris.

In vain Mlle. Anselme donned a double pair of spectacles; she read with a slowness and lack of understanding that exasperated the impatient duchess.

Mlle. Anselme knew better than to read well. She foresaw a task descending on her without a ha'penny's increase in her wages. Her reasoning was to the point, yet Mlle. Anselme, cunning woman as she was, made a mistake. How often, later, did she curse that inspiration of her laziness!

Suddenly the duchess cried out, during the abominable reading:

"Lamiel! Tell them to get the horses out and go down to the village for little Lamiel, the girl at the Hautemares; and let her bring her uncle or aunt with her."

Lamiel appeared two hours later, in her Sunday clothes. To begin with, she read badly, but with such charming grace that the duchess forgot the interest of the news from La Vendée. The girl's lovely eyes, so finely expressive, blazed with ardor as she read the enthusiastic phrases in the *Quotidienne*.

She's on the right side, thought the duchess.

And when, towards eleven o'clock, Lamiel and her uncle took leave of the great lady, the latter had a

decided inclination to take Lamiel into her service.

But Mme. Hautemare would not entertain the idea that at nine or ten at night, Lamiel, a big girl of fifteen and very sharp for her age, should make her way back from the castle to the schoolmaster's little house.

There followed very complicated negotiations, lasting more than three weeks. This delay sufficed to raise to the degree of passion, on the duchess's side, her vague enough scheme for getting Lamiel to the castle to read the newspaper.

After infinite parleying (to reproduce which would have the merit of portraying the Norman genius, of which we see such good examples in Paris, but at the risk of appearing long-winded to the benevolent reader) it was agreed that Lamiel should pass the night in Mlle. Anselme's room, which room had the honor of being next door to the duchess's. This last fact, which entirely reassured the scruples and still more the vanity of Mme. Hautemare, yet greatly upset her from another aspect.

"Don't you see?" she said to her husband when all seemed settled. "The spiteful tongues in Carville can say our niece has gone into service. That renews the hopes of your nephew the Jacobin who has spread *so many horrors* about us."

The affair was almost wrecked on this scruple; for the duchess, on her side, considered it a signal honor for the schoolmaster's niece to enter the castle, and made it clear without mincing matters to Mme. Haute-

mare. Thereupon the shrewd villager curtsied deeply to the great lady and took her leave without a word.

"That's indeed the revolution!" cried the duchess, beside herself. "It's no use imagining we can escape it; we're besieged by the revolution, and it even filters in among the people who make their living out of us."

The reflection penetrated her with anger, sorrow and fear. The first thing next morning, after a sleepless night, the duchess summoned the worthy Hautemare to give him a rating; but she had quite a new surprise when the schoolmaster, in consternation and rolling his hat in his hands, so alarmed was he on account of the terrible message he was charged with, announced that, after carefully thinking it over, Lamiel's chest was too delicate for her to accept the honor which the duchess wished to do her.

The reply to this impertinent declaration was borrowed from *Bazajet;* it consisted in the single word: "Begone!"

The duchess had wanted to manage the affair without mentioning it to the curé Du Saillard. The remarkable depth of mind of this adroit priest had given him the unpardonable fault of sometimes going too far in his comments when confronted with over-absurd objections.

There again, thought the duchess, is something that would have been unknown before '89.

Thus she avoided speaking to the curé about serious matters as much as possible. Sometimes, even, Mme. de Miossens made the experiment of inviting

Du Saillard to dinner and only addressing two words of politeness to him—one on his arrival and the other on his departure. The intelligent fellow laughed at such pretentiousness and patiently waited until the duchess needed him. In her rage at the schoolmaster, the great lady at once sent for Du Saillard without even having the sense to ask him to dinner and to keep silence as to Lamiel until the end of the meal.

Du Saillard considered the affair so badly embarked upon as to be hopeless. Without mentioning Lamiel, at the very start, something wrong ought to have been discovered as to the school that Hautemare kept. For therein was the source of his prosperity and presumption. Then would have followed a threat to close the school, or, if need were, that might really have been done. After that Hautemare would humbly have come to beg that Lamiel should be taken into the castle. In all its bitterness the curé made the duchess feel her immense mistake in not consulting him in the matter; then, without giving advice, he left her in profound despair at having had her vanity outraged by a peasant.

Deprived of her very slight capability for business by the intensity of her feelings, the noble lady could not salvage a scrap of dignity at the pass matters had reached, and Mlle. Anselme addressed to Monsieur Hautemare an official letter, saying, in the name of *Madame,* that *Mademoiselle* Lamiel would have the honor of being employed about the duchess in the quality of reader, acting as such until a person of

greater learning should arrive from Paris. The whole village was scandalized at the addition to Lamiel's name of the word *Mademoiselle.*

Lamiel herself had not ignored all the steps taken by her uncle over the last three weeks, and passionately desired to enter the castle. She had caught sight of the fine furniture with which the rooms were filled; above all, she had seen a magnificent library and all the gilt-edged volumes composing it. She forgot to notice that these volumes were in glass-fronted bookcases, whose key was carried, attached to her watch, by the very distrustful duchess.

When she arrived, and in order to stay, in this grand castle which had a very severe slate roof like an extinguisher, Lamiel felt so strange and violent a sensation in her breast that she was obliged to pause on the steps mounting to the door. In intelligence she was twenty years old, and her aunt, who had accompanied her thus far but was unwilling to enter, so as to escape having to *thank* the duchess, strongly admonished her never to laugh in front of the maids and never to join in any merriment. "Otherwise," said Mme. Hautemare, "they'll despise you as a peasant and always be heaping little insults on you—little pinpricks that you can't complain to the duchess about, but so cruel that after a few months you'll do anything to get out of the place."

These were fatal words for Lamiel. All her happiness melted at once. Profound discouragement possessed her when she regarded the faces of the women

in the duchess's service. After only three days, Lamiel was so miserable that she lost her appetite. The room she slept in had a splendid carpet, but it was forbidden to walk over it quickly; to do so would have betrayed ill-breeding and lack of respect for Madame. Everything had to be done slowly and with deliberation in this magnificent castle because it had the privilege to be inhabited by a noblewoman. The duchess's court was more especially composed of eight women, of whom the youngest was well over fifty. The *valet de chambre,* Poitevin, was still older, as were the three footmen who alone had the distinction of entering the long series of rooms which occupied the first floor. There was a superb garden with walks bordered by limes and hornbeam severely clipped thrice a year. Two gardeners looked after a magnificent flower bed that extended beneath the windows of the castle.

After a couple of days, it was ordered that Lamiel should only walk, even in the flower garden, accompanied by one of Madame's maids, and those damsels always found it too damp, too warm or too cold for a promenade. As to the castle's interior, those damsels, who nearly all pretended to youth although more than fifty years old, discovered that the daylight was in bad taste, etc., etc.

In short, hardly a month had gone by before Lamiel was perishing of boredom, and her existence was none the more lightened by the issue of the faithful *Quotidienne* which she read to Madame each evening. What a difference from the life of *Mandrin,* to her mind the

most thrilling book in the world! She had forgotten to bring her library with her, and when she went in the carriage to pass a few moments with her foster parents, she was never by herself for a moment and able to go where the books were hidden.

She almost lost the desire to go out for a walk. She was so wretched that her budding vanity, alert as it was, did not even take cognizance of her success with the duchess, which was immense. What above all made her conquest with the great lady was her lack of an *air of gentility*.

It must be mentioned that, of the Revolution's disastrous effects, that which Mme. de Miossens most remarked was the assumption of an appearance of dignity and pride by the daughters of lower-class individuals who had made a little money. Lamiel was too vivacious and energetic to move with slow steps and eyes cast down, or at least with gaze indrawn, so that they only allowed a careless glance to pass over the splendid carpet in the duchess's drawing room. The charitable counsels of the maids had given Lamiel a curious attraction. She indeed walked slowly, but like a chained gazelle. A thousand little impulsive movements revealed her village upbringing. She was incapable of acquiring the carriage adopted in fine society, which has to seem the final effort of a nature demanding only to undertake no action. As soon as she was no longer under the severe watch of some of the older maids, she ran skipping through the rooms that had to be traversed to reach the duchess. Made

aware of this by the women's denunciations, the noble lady caused a mirror to be placed in her drawing room so as to observe such gaiety from her armchair. Though Lamiel was lightness itself, everything was so silent in the vast mansion that the shock of her bounds was perceptible all through it. Everyone was scandalized, and it was that which decided the fortune of the young peasant. When the duchess was sure that she had not made the acquisition of a young girl giving herself the airs of a fine lady, she utterly surrendered to her lively inclination towards Lamiel. The latter hardly understood half the words she read in the *Quotidienne*. The duchess asserted that, to read well, comprehension was necessary; thereupon she gave herself the pleasure of explaining everything spoken of in the newspaper. This was no simple matter and, without the duchess having foreseen it, her care for the girl's education became each evening the source of a delightful way of passing the time; it drew out the reading of the *Quotidienne* to three hours instead of half an hour. The great lady explained to the young Norman peasant, who was very intelligent but quite ignorant, everything under the sun, and finally, these commentaries on the newspaper delivered by the postman at eight o'clock often filled up the evening until midnight.

"What, it's twelve?" cried the duchess gaily. "I thought it was ten at most. Here's another evening ended well!"

She hated going to bed early. Frequently the com-

mentaries began again next morning, and then, incredibly, the duchess, who often enough declared that it was the Normans who had ruined France, now insisted that the lectures inspired by the *Quotidienne* would not be enough to educate the *child*—for so Lamiel was called at the castle. The young girl, in order properly to perform her office as reader, must also understand the spiteful anecdotes about bankers' wives and other ladies of the Liberal party with which the paper enriched its articles. The *child* read aloud the *Evenings at the Castle* by *Mme. de Genlis,* and, after that, the extremely moral romances of that famous and gushing authoress. Next, the duchess found Lamiel worthy to comprehend the *Dictionary of Etiquette,* the most profound work of the century. All that dealt with the differences, and especially the boundaries, of the various social ranks had a particular claim on the interest of a woman who, through the whole of her youth, had been on the eve of becoming a duchess. It was a fatality that she only reached this supreme elevation, the idol of the women of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, at the age of forty, when, as she said, she no longer hankered after a title. The unhappiness that came from her protracted suspense had embittered a character naturally feeble and superstitious, without resource once her youthful freshness had faded. She might have found consolation in passionate attentions to some poor man brought by fate to the castle; but a first misadventure of this kind was treated with so much horror by the director of her

conscience that the duchess arrived without sinning anew at the doors of old age, and that constant sorrow of her every moment ended in souring her nature. There were times when she felt the need to be exasperated. When she first arrived in Normandy, the haughtiness of this marquise who demanded to be treated as a duchess seemed so extraordinary to the noble ladies of the neighboring domains that the Miossens drawing room was proclaimed superlatively boring. Nobody visited there who could possibly help it, and if the duchess's invitations to dinner were ever accepted, it was above all when the early vegetables were in season. From the habits of a great fortune, the duchess had preserved that of sending messengers on horseback to Paris for the first green peas, the first asparagus, etc., etc. She knew well enough what the many fine households of the district hardly attempted to hide—that she was only visited on account of those messengers returning from Paris.

SIX

Sansfin and Saillard

THE PRETENDED weakness of the duchess's eyes served as an excuse for that amiable woman never to separate herself from Lamiel, who had obviously succeeded to the credit of the dog Dash, which had died a little before.

Such a life should have been delightful to a common little peasant, but it had hardly lasted a year before the little peasant lost all her gaiety of youth.

Several months passed thus; then Lamiel fell seriously ill. From the start the danger was so great that the duchess resigned herself to calling in Doctor Sansfin, who for some years had only come to the castle on New Year's Day. Du Saillard had induced her to prefer Doctor Buirette, of Mortain, a little town which lay a few leagues from the castle. He was afraid lest Sansfin should dominate her and even cure the pretended eye trouble. The hunchback doctor, in his limitless vanity, exulted at the call to the castle; it was the only thing lacking to his renown in the district. He determined to make a profound impression. He had the idea that the duchess must be dying

of boredom; consequently, for the first half of his visit, he was perfectly brutal; he proffered the strangest words to the great lady, whose own speech he knew to be so measured and elegant.

Next he appeared astounded at the young girl's illness.

"Here's a case very rare in Normandy," he said to himself. "It's sheer *boredom,* despite the duchess's caresses, the excellent cook, the early vegetables, the castle's splendid furniture, etc. It's really most curious. I must take care not to get myself banished. I have applied the caustic of brutality forcibly enough. Besides, this duchess may become ill or faint, and I should be bored myself. Be careful, doctor! The cruellest thing I can invent for the service of the noble lady, who at this moment loathes me, is to send the girl back to her relatives."

Sansfin returned suddenly to his usual manner; if it was not very distinguished, it at any rate gave the impression of a serious man overwhelmed with work, who had no time to soften the energy of his thought or polish his expressions.

He assumed his most mournful air:

"Your Grace, I am grieved that I must prepare you to hear the worst; all is over for this adorable child. I only see one way of perhaps delaying the progress of this terrible disease of the chest. It is absolutely essential," he added, summoning his harshness again, "that she go back to the little room in the Hautemares' cottage where she lived so long."

"You were not called in, sir," cried the duchess angrily, "to change the order of my household, but to try, if you can, to cure the child's illness."

"Accept the homage of my deepest respect," sardonically retorted the doctor, "and send for the curé. My time is claimed by other patients, whom those around them will help me to cure indeed."

The doctor went off without stopping to listen to Mlle. Anselme, whom the duchess sent after him. He felt uneasy at inflicting grief on so noble and so fine-looking a lady!

"What coarseness! What lack of every decency!" cried the duchess, beside herself with rage. "As if the brute had not been paid for a second half-hour which he ought to have devoted to the girl! Let Du Saillard be sent for."

The curé appeared at once. He could not cut his discourse to Sansfin's brevity; following the code of his profession, accustomed to addressing fools and having to guard every avenue against criticism, his first reply lasted quite five minutes. So verbose a clothing of his thought would alarm the reader, but it pleased the duchess, who found once more a familiar tone. The curé fully sympathized with her rage at the disgusting behavior of *that man,* whom everywhere else he spoke of as his worthy friend; and at the end of a visit lasting no less than seven quarters of an hour, the duchess resolved to send a messenger to bring back a doctor from Paris.

"The great objection to such a step is that never

before has a Paris doctor been called down to one of the servants."

"I might suggest to your Grace the very simple plan of calling the doctor down for your own health, which, indeed, it gives us pain to see greatly impaired after all these disturbances."

"My maids will see well enough," said the duchess, with the voice of an old Roman, "that he is coming from Paris for Lamiel and not for me."

The doctor, summoned by messenger, after making himself awaited forty-eight hours, at last condescended to appear. This M. Duchâteau was a kind of suburban Lovelace, still young and very elegant. He talked a great deal, and sensibly, but with something so horribly common in what he did and said that he shocked even the duchess's maids. Besides, amid his verbiage, the maids themselves noticed that he hardly deigned to give six minutes' investigation into Lamiel's illness. On an attempt to describe the symptoms to him, he declared that such a recital was useless and prescribed a completely innocuous treatment. When after three days he returned to Paris, his absence was a relief to Mme. de Miossens. Then followed a call to the doctor at Mortain, who was in correspondence with one of the maids and pretended illness in order not to come. At last a doctor from Rouen was obtained, a M. Duvillers who, very unlike his Paris colleague, looked gloomy and said nothing. He did not want an interview with the duchess, but told the curé that the little patient had not six months

left. The announcement dealt the duchess a cruel blow; for it deprived her of her only distraction in the world. Her fancy for Lamiel was at its height. In despair, she often repeated that she would give a hundred thousand francs to save her. On hearing this, her coachman said to her with an Alsatian's clumsy frankness:

"You had better send for Sansfin again, Madame."

One day, returning sadly from Mass along the main street of Carville in her carriage, she saw from afar the hunchback doctor and instinctively called to him. He had invented a piece of mischief which made him hurry to the carriage with a most candid expression. He got in and, on reaching the patient, declared that she was frightfully changed and prescribed remedies which redoubled all the symptoms. This villainous trick had a success that ravished him. The duchess herself fell ill, and since, despite the apparently appalling egotism which was only a form of her haughtiness, she was really goodhearted, she bitterly reproached herself for not allowing Lamiel to be taken back to her foster parents. The transportation was effected, and the hunchback doctor said to himself, "I will be her remedy."

He set himself to interest the invalid and paint her a glowing picture of life. He employed numerous means to that end; for instance, he took out a subscription to the *Gazette des Tribunaux,* and it was read to Lamiel each morning. The crimes attracted her; she was sensible of the firmness of mind displayed

by some of the miscreants. In less than a fortnight her extreme pallor seemed to diminish. One day, the duchess remarked on this.

"Well, Madame," cried Sansfin haughtily, "is it a good idea to call down doctors from Paris when there's a Doctor Sansfin in the neighborhood? A curé may be intelligent, but when his intelligence is poisoned by envy, he's as like a fool as two drops of water are alike. Sansfin sees what is true *in all directions,* but I must confess that the sciences I study, to try and perfect myself in my art, give me so little time to spare that I am apt to state the truth in terms too clear and too precise. I know that gilded drawing rooms shudder to hear the simple language of a virtuous man who doesn't need to pay court to anyone. Because of your egotism, so as not to part with a maid who amuses you, you didn't at first want Lamiel moved to her relations, and you've endangered her life. It isn't for me to tell you how religion judges such an action. If M. Du Saillard, the curé, dared to fulfill his duty towards a woman of your rank, his severity would perhaps be more offensive than mine; but when his patients lose their souls, it matters nothing to him. The death of the soul is different from the death of the body. His trade is more accommodating than mine. As to the remedies of your fool from Paris, and those of the doctor from Rouen, they have put the *child* at death's door. Contradict me if I'm wrong, and I, who have so much humanity and love for my profession that if one of those old imbecile women with whom you fill your

castle had allowed me—I would have penetrated to our charming invalid's bedside and substituted real remedies for the poisons administered by that quack from Paris; but it was not possible. And please notice, Madame, that I risked a criminal trial to save a little girl who gives you amusement. Thus it is, your Grace, that stupidity in what seems the most trifling case, can be fatal. For a week I managed to have news of the little girl morning and evening. She was dying, and at any instant might have been taken with a vomiting of blood, during which she would have died in your arms. Had it been given her, at the supreme moment, to know the truth, she might well have said, 'Your Grace, you're killing me! You're sacrificing my life to your disgust at the firm and noble language of truth—truth, which shocks you because you heard it from the mouth of a poor country doctor!' "

The duchess was thunderstruck at the doctor's words. She thought it was a prophet who spoke. She had so badly arranged her life that, for a long while, nobody had troubled to be eloquent in order to prevent her being bored. She let her days flow away as in the time when her drawing room was animated with beauty and charming conversation.

The doctor increased at will the great lady's indisposition. He made her mad with grief. It is a fact that for an hour a day he submitted her to the terrible magnetism of his infernal eloquence. She was so unwell that she no longer had the strength to come and see Lamiel twice daily at her foster parents'. Then,

through the attentions of the doctor, who wished to cure her languor, she reached such a pitch of folly that she publicly spent several days in the cottage next door to the Hautemares, which in a few hours the doctor caused to be evacuated and refurnished. What augmented Sansfin's zeal was the fury of Du Saillard, who used all his genius to devise some means of getting the hunchback doctor out of the district. The latter's defense was very simple. Everybody at Carville was afraid of the curé. The doctor, after repeating it in all tones two or three hundred times, made the duchess and the village understand that the curé was jealous of him because he had saved little Lamiel, for whom Du Saillard had wanted to have a doctor from Paris. Once well explained, the matter became so clear that the whole village *twigged the point* (commercial travellers' language), and the curé's great agitation was no more an enigma. The doctor neglected nothing to make the curés of the district realize the truth. They were charmed at being able to discover a weakness in the terrible curé of Carville, who was charged with their supervision.

SEVEN

Lamiel's Illness

THE DOCTOR said to himself, "I must accomplish two objects: to win the love of Lamiel, who is nearly seventeen and will be charming when I've sharpened her wits; to make myself indispensable to that great lady with the fine features, who is still very good-looking in spite of her fifty-two years, so that she will resolve, after a few months' or a year's struggle, to make a left-handed marriage with the country doctor so hardly used by nature."

The duchess consulted him on everything, and it came to pass that, since seeing Sansfin each day and several times a day, she hardly knew what it was to be bored.

In the agitation stirred in her mind by the doctor, she openly declared that since inhabiting a cottage she had known happiness.

"I should be completely at ease," she added, "were I reassured as to Lamiel's health."

In these circumstances, Sansfin pretended that the chemist at Avranches would never be able to compound certain pills necessary for restoring the young

invalid's strength. He went to pass a few days at Rouen; for some months he had been in frequent correspondence with M. Gigard, confidential grand vicar to the cardinal archbishop. On reaching Rouen, he judged it incumbent on him to clinch the conquest of his correspondent and induce him to propose that Sansfin should make a general confession under his sponsorship; thus he arrived at the real object of his journey. He was presented to the cardinal and conducted himself so adroitly, showing such intelligence and moderation, and bestowing such treacherous praise on the curé Du Saillard, who had not been at Rouen for eighteen months, that when he left that capital, the cardinal would rather have heard a denunciation of Du Saillard from him than one of him from Du Saillard. Having reached this point, the country doctor saw the possibility approaching of marriage with a widow of the highest nobility, who had a legal income of more than eighty thousand francs, and who in fact, having an only son of seventeen, a pupil at the École Polytechnique, was able to spend nearly two hundred thousand francs a year.

"I will *get my hooks* on this son's intelligence. I will make him worship me," said Sansfin to himself, as he walked alone on Saint Catherine's Hill overlooking Rouen, "and in any case, if the worst befalls, what's to stop me bolting to America with a hundred thousand francs in my pocket? Once there, under an assumed name—Dupont or Durand—I will start as a doctor again, and also, I shall have arranged matters

so well in getting away with my hundred or two hundred thousand francs, that the duchess and her son would be covered with ridicule if they thought of having me pursued."

Sansfin returned to Carville. Lamiel's recovery proceeded apace, and as that might give Mme. de Miossens the idea of going back to the castle, the doctor had recourse to drugs in order to make his patient seem worse.

Events had reached this point when Sansfin took to shooting in the forest of Imberville. There, one day, laying aside his gun, he meditated profoundly.

"Well, so be it!" he said to himself, seated on a beech tree's roots which projected from the earth. "Here I am, husband of the duchess, handling just as I like a fortune of more than two hundred thousand francs a year—what of it? I haven't altered my position. I've only *gilded* it. I'm still a being of a lower order, *paying my court to people more powerful than I* and always having to struggle against their contempt —and, what's worse, a contempt that I know I deserve. Now for my second plan—transplanted to America I call myself, if I want to, M. de Surgeaire. I have two hundred thousand francs in my pocket. How do things stand then? My position is embellished for the worse. I have the burden of my crime to add to my hump. This hump identifies me everywhere and, considering the infamous liberty of the press which reigns in America, what would I do if, one morning, I read all my story in the newspapers? No, I'm tired of pre-

tending. I want *the legitimate and the real.* Money's only a luxury for me. Certainly, a fine coach would prevent my deformity from being seen, but to live on, I don't need more than ten thousand francs."

After four hours of feverish agitation, the doctor left the forest of Imberville and returned to Carville, quite decided to make the duchess only an intimate friend, and not at all a wife. This villainy the less made him quite happy. A week later, he soliloquized:

"Good God! What a blunder it would have been to burden myself with another imposture. I should do much better to develop my natural gifts. For if nature has given me a sad enough exterior, I can at least handle words and control the opinion of fools, and even," he added, with a satisfied smile, "of intelligent people, for, after all, the duchess isn't too bad in that respect. She has an admirable perception of what is ridiculous and affected, only, like all her class, she never reasons. Reasoning, since it doesn't admit of pleasantry, seems a horribly sad affair to her, and when, by chance, she wants to reason and arrive at a conclusion of which I disapprove, I can always destroy the whole of her argument with a sharp, witty word. As for me, I know how to work. To become a deputy, I should have to make some slight study of political economy and run over the titles of a few hundred administrative ordinances. Well, what's that in comparison with the study of three or four maladies? In my first attempts to address the Chamber, my hump will save me from

being envied. Why bolt to America? My country offers me a suitable position. Mme. de Miossens must establish a well-respected salon in Paris, and this salon will vouch for me in good society. Through the cardinal archbishop I can get myself on the right side of the Catholic revivalists. After these two excellent beginnings, the door will be open to me if my *legs* are strong enough. Meanwhile, I must have some amusement. While I am carrying out my grand scheme, I must give myself the first fruits of that young girl's heart."

To attain all these fine objectives Sansfin made Lamiel's pretended illness last several months. Since the origin of the small degree of reality in this very simple indisposition was boredom, Sansfin sacrificed everything to the design of amusing the invalid; but he was astonished by the clarity and vigor of this young mind: it was most difficult to deceive her. Soon Lamiel was convinced that the poor doctor of so grotesque an aspect was her only friend in the world. In a short time, with pleasantries, Sansfin succeeded in destroying all the affection of Lamiel's warm heart for her aunt and uncle Hautemare.

"All you believe, all they tell you now, and which makes you so charming, is spoilt by the reflection of all the shabbiness which the worthy Hautemare and his wife have given you for respectable truth. What nature has given you is a charming grace and a kind of gaiety which spreads, without your knowing, to those happy enough to hear you. Look at the duchess;

she is devoid of sense, and yet, if she were still pretty, she would pass for a very likeable woman. Well! you have made her conquest to the point where there is no sacrifice which she would not joyfully undertake for the happiness of passing her evenings with you. But your position is dangerous; you must expect the blackest plot on the part of her maids. Mlle. Anselme, especially, changes color when she catches the merest word in your praise. The curé Du Saillard is accustomed to succeed in all he attempts. If he unites with the maids, you are lost, for you have every possible grace; but your youth still lacks intelligence, you can't reason. As far as that goes, I am certainly able to be of use to you; but your illness is going to cease immediately, and then I shall no longer have an excuse for seeing you and you might commit appalling blunders. If I were in your place, I should try most to acquire intelligence. It will take from one to two months."

"Why not tell me all this in a couple of words? Why this quarter of an hour's preface? Ever since you began, I'm worried to know what you're leading up to."

"I want you," said Sansfin, laughing, "to commit a horrible murder. Every week I'll bring you in the pocket of my shooting coat, made by Staub,[1] a live bird. I'll cut off its head, and you must let its blood drop on a little sponge which you'll then put in your

[1] The fashionable tailor. (Note by Stendhal.)

mouth. Will you have the courage to do this? I doubt it."

"And what then?" asked Lamiel.

"Then," answered the doctor, "while you're with the duchess, from time to time you must spit blood. With your chest so far gone, there won't be any more objection to what I want to bring about in order to amuse you. I've already told you your illness leads to consumption. Nothing could be more dangerous to a girl of your age; but as a matter of fact, there's nothing wrong with you except boredom."

"And what about you, doctor? Aren't you afraid of boring me by teaching me to become what you call intelligent?"

"No, because what I want you to do entails work, and work gives pleasure and chases boredom away. Just think, that of all things a young girl of Lower Normandy believes in, there's not one that isn't either idiotic or a lie. What does the ivy you see below in the avenue do to the finest oaks?"

"It clasps one side of the trunk very firmly and then goes up the biggest branches."

"Well," answered the doctor, "the natural good sense that chance has given you is the lofty oak; but as long as you believed the twelve or fifteen stupidities a day which they doled out to you, and which they believed themselves, those stupidities clung to your best thoughts just as the ivy clings to the oaks in the avenue. Now I've come to cut the ivy and clear the tree. When I leave you, you'll see me dismount and

cut the ivy on the twenty trees to the left. That's my first lesson and we'll call it the rule of the ivy. Write the words on the first page of your book of hours, and whenever you catch yourself believing in anything written in that book, say the word 'Ivy' to yourself. You'll get to realize that at present you don't possess a single idea which doesn't contain a lie."

"So," cried Lamiel, laughing, "when I say it's three leagues and a half from here to Avranches, I'm telling a lie! Ah, my poor doctor, what absurdities you hand out! Mercifully, you're amusing."

The doctor's greatest artistry lay in giving this tone to the talks he had with the young invalid. He was aware that the seriousness she had to maintain in the duchess's company made the time passed with him infinitely more agreeable.

"And," he said to himself, "if some day one of those infamous young men whom I detest, whom nature has endowed with a flawless body, should speak of love to my little jewel, this cast of speech will frighten the hangdog swine and I'll have no difficulty in making him appear ridiculous."

Although the blood of the poor little bird which the doctor brought to his patient was at first repugnant, he nevertheless prevailed on her to place in her mouth the little sponge steeped in it and, still better, by the tone of voice he affected, he gave her not only the conviction, but even the very sensation, of committing a great crime. He made her repeat terrible vows after him, whereby she engaged herself never

to reveal his instructions in the matter. The young girl's mind was deeply agitated when she witnessed the death inflicted on the charming little bird. She hid her eyes with her handkerchief in order not to see the crime. The doctor rejoiced at the violent emotions he had awakened in so pretty a creature.

"She will be mine," he said to himself.

His whole being was filled with delight at having reduced her to the state of *accomplice*. She would have been no less so, had he involved her in the greatest crimes. He had traced the path in the young soul, and that was the essential point. A second advantage, no less important, which he had obtained by the application of *terror,* was the young girl's acquisition of the habit of discretion.

This habit was facilitated by the astonishing success attending the death of the bird. Once the duchess was convinced that her young favorite sometimes coughed blood, Lamiel's most extravagant fantasies became law with her. It was forbidden to infringe upon them. To complete his domination, the doctor, who feared exceedingly the genius of Du Saillard, did not miss the occasion to be cruel to the duchess.

"That young chest," he often repeated to her, "has been inflamed for a long time, and perhaps entirely ruined by the excessive reading which the honor of employment about your person obliged her to undertake."

He neglected nothing to inflict the liveliest remorse on his new friend. This remorse, to which every day

the duchess pleaded some objection, was a new cause of intimacy between the country doctor and the great lady. It became so intense that the doctor said to himself:

"Since I don't want to make her my wife, I'll talk to her of love."

At first, of course, it was a question of platonic love alone; that was always Sansfin's trick, so as to distract his victim's attention from his frightful deformity.

It was this misfortune which, since earliest childhood, had accustomed the doctor to attach extreme importance to the least detail. From the age of eight, his incredible vanity would take offense at a half-smile seen on the other side of the road as he passed.

Under pretext of being very sensitive to the cold, the doctor had adopted the practice of wearing magnificent capes and furs of every kind. He imagined that his faulty frame was thus hidden, while this superfluity of material, placed over shoulders already too prominent, merely rendered his misshapen structure more visible. As soon as the evenings began to freshen, in the month of September, he was grateful to perceive on the far side of the market place the first man of good position in Carville who had decided to put on a cape. He ran home at once, and said, in the course of each evening visit:

"I've taken to my cape; it's Mr. So-and-so who set me the example. There's nothing so dangerous as the early cold. It can cause a repercussion on the chest of the congestion dissipated by imperceptible perspira-

tion, and any amount of consumption is caused by it."

The following method served the doctor perfectly with the women:

His first step was to isolate them, under pretext of their being ill; by this simple means, he plunged them into boredom; then he amused them with a thousand attentions and sometimes succeeded in making them forget his curious deformity. To indulge his vanity, he adopted the salutary method of not counting his defeats, but only his successes.

"Made as I am," he said to himself early in life, "of every hundred women I attack, I can hardly count on more than two victories."

And it only mortified him when he missed that percentage.

EIGHT

Party in the Tower

THE DOCTOR had succeeded in provoking the duchess to action by engaging Lamiel—which, indeed, was not difficult—to show unwillingness to return to the castle. The duchess had bought a garden next to Hautemare's cottage and used it as the site for erecting a square tower which, on each floor, contained a magnificent room and an antechamber. What engaged her to indulge this expensive caprice was the desire to show the inhabitants of Carville, too deeply infected with radicalism, a veritable tower of the Middle Ages, which could not fail to remind them of their former position in regard to the masters of Miossens. The tower, built on the terrain of the garden, was the exact copy of one half in ruins standing in the park of the castle. The doctor prevailed over certain objections advanced by the duchess's avarice by pointing out that use could be made, for the new tower, of the square-cut stones forming the old one. Then, when it was built, he noticed that the country masons had not placed them exactly in line. He had stonecarvers brought from Paris, who in places

chipped the stone away to a depth of six inches and ran round the tower an ornamental groining copied from the Saracenic architecture of which Spain has such fine remains. At this period of the new edifice's existence, it produced an immense effect on the grand houses of the neighborhood.

"It is at the same time useful and pleasing to the eye," declared the Marquis de Fernozière. "In the event of a Jacobin revolt, one could take refuge in a tower like that and easily hold out for eight or ten days, until the *gendarmerie* of the region was mobilized. In a more peaceful time the view of so fine a monument will win respect for the manorial establishments in the district."

The doctor arranged that this judgment should be repeated to the duchess at least twenty times within a fortnight. She was at the peak of happiness. Her lack of success with the neighboring grandees was one of her life's sorrows, and the boredom in which she languished before Lamiel's illness adding a new bitterness to the more or less real frustration with which she believed her existence overshadowed, she uttered a little cry of poignant despair when, in the course of a drive, she caught sight of one of the region's great houses. The doctor had not neglected to make her confess the reason for those little cries. He pretended that possibly they were the symptoms of some horrible chest disease. For more than a month he pondered the state of ecstasy wherein the success of the tower had thrown Mme. de Miossens. The passion which

actually in her case he found the chief difficulty in overcoming was her avarice. He wished to deal it a decisive blow, and when all was ready, he cried one day, with an air of deepest conviction:

"Admit, Madame, one very happy circumstance; this tower is costing you fifty or fifty-five thousand francs at most—well, it's going to give you more than a hundred thousand francs' worth of pleasure. The vanity of these little squires all round you is at last in retreat. They are paying homage to the exalted rank to which Providence has called you. Condescend to invite them to a grand banquet which you will give to inaugurate the *Albret Tower.*" (This name had been given to the tower in the marshal's honor.)

For some months the doctor had been working to reconcile the nobility of the district with the duchess's rather peculiar disposition. He spread the idea in all the great houses that the apparent haughtiness which shocked them was not real haughtiness, but simply a bad habit of mind contracted in Paris, of which, incidentally, the duchess was beginning to feel the absurdity.

She gave a splendid feast to inaugurate the Albret Tower. It had five floors, and the doctor arranged that there should be a table set on each. A shed of planks was erected to serve as a kitchen ten paces away. Tables, to which the parents of Hautemare's pupils were invited, were placed in a meadow near. The curious division of the best company between five tables naturally gave rise to extreme gaiety, which

was redoubled by the genuine amiability with which, for the first time in her life, the duchess replied to the compliments addressed to her. This change was Sansfin's masterpiece.

He had ordered musicians who came at nightfall as though by chance, when all the young women at the five tables were beginning to regret that no one had thought of ending so enjoyable a day with a ball. Sansfin remounted the stairs at a run and announced that the duchess had had the idea of stopping a troop of musicians on their way to Bayeux.

The trees in the meadow were illuminated, also as though by chance, and dancing started for the peasants. The highest room in the tower, that on the fifth floor, was reserved for the ladies, in which to make the changes in their toilette necessitated by the improvised ball. During the half-hour consecrated to this occupation Doctor Sansfin explained to the gentlemen of the neighborhood how, without a thought having been given to the matter, the Albret Tower would be an extremely difficult fortress to take.

"Your ancestors, gentlemen, were well versed in questions of war and, as the masons have exactly followed the plan of the old tower without dreaming that they were forging the chains of the lower classes, they have constructed a stronghold which will be a refuge for all right-minded persons if ever the Jacobins start burning the great houses again."

This consoling idea completed the day's pleasure. From eight o'clock to midnight the ladies danced, and

their husbands, all preoccupied with the tower, did not think of having the horses attached to the carriages until it was quite late. The peasants danced on to dawn. The doctor had ridden off to have barrels of beer, and even wine, brought to the meadow.

That day entirely altered the duchess's bearing towards her neighbors and was also the time in which she altogether forgot the barbarous way nature had treated that delightful person, Doctor Sansfin.

Lamiel saw the whole party from the confinement of the duchess's carriage which had been driven, with its windows up, into the middle of the meadow. More than twenty times the duchess came to make sure that her favorite was safe from the damp. Her avarice, until now her ruling passion, was entirely conquered.

A week after this famous party at the Albret Tower, which will long be of renown in the region of Bayeux, a huge furniture van from Paris arrived at Carville. It was filled with furniture movers, carpet layers and trappings of every kind fit to furnish a mansion. They splendidly adorned the five rooms, one above the other, which composed the Gothic tower. The duchess, rid of her avarice, was discovering a void in her heart and falling into a love of excess; already she was planning a second dinner party.

The second-floor room, intended for Lamiel, was enchantingly arranged, and Lamiel made known to the doctor that she longed to dwell there. In vain Sansfin begged her on his knees to consider that the room, which was extremely damp, would be bad for

anyone even as strong as a peasant, while she had the same kind of health as a fashionable lady; Lamiel was inflexible. Sansfin changed his opinion that during the last five months the pretty Norman, in her budding vanity, had always been learning from him. He was always in the right, while Lamiel's mind still remained inferior to his. He carefully tried several experiments, but at last assured himself as to the true principle of the young girl's caprices.

"Already vanity! Already the pride of her sex!" he exclaimed. "I must be quick and yield, or else I shall plant the seeds of an aversion which may last over this charming girl's best years, when her conquest would really be an agreeable episode for a poor fellow as misshapen as I."

NINE

Lamiel's Education and the Abbé Clément

At the period of the feast to inaugurate the tower, there died the curé of a small village very close to the castle of Miossens and, on the duchess's recommendation, the archbishop of Rouen bestowed this little parish on the Abbé Clément, nephew of Mlle. Anselme, housekeeper at the castle and all-powerful there before Lamiel's arrival. The young priest, very pale, pious and well-instructed, was tall, thin and more than half consumptive, but he had what was a cruel fault for his position, and knew well that, in spite of himself and his strongest powers of resistance, he was very intelligent. Soon, even taking into account his lowly origin and in virtue of a mind which always judged the better of two alternatives, he became an indispensable personage in Mme. de Miossens's drawing room. At the very first, without too much ceremony he had been told that when he had been made curé, at twenty-four, of a living worth a hundred and fifty francs a year, an assiduity without

limit was expected from him. The duchess took the young curé to the cottage where Lamiel dwelt. He was struck with the grace that he discovered in the union of a lively, bold and very receptive spirit with an almost complete ignorance of worldly affairs and a perfectly naïve mind. Once, for instance, when the duchess was getting into the carriage to go and pass the evening at the Hautemare's cottage with the Abbé Clément, an enormous case, which he kindly opened, was unloaded from the Paris diligence. It was a magnificent portrait whose frame alone cost several thousand francs. It was a portrait of Fédor de Miossens, the duchess's only son, in the uniform of the École Polytechnique. The duchess had the hood of the landau let down, despite her horror of the evening dampness. She wanted to show the portrait to her dear Lamiel, and hardly dared to surrender to her delight in it without the opinion of the cherished being who possessed her heart. On reaching Lamiel's room, she indulged in the most exaggerated praise, but her eye questioned her favorite, who remained silent. After any number of remarks which cried for a response, the duchess, in her eagerness, was reduced to asking Lamiel point-blank what she thought of the face in the picture. Lamiel had admired the carving of the frame; at the duchess's question, she hardly cast the slightest glance at the figure portrayed, then said simply and quite without malice that to her the young soldier's countenance seemed insignificant. In spite of the Abbé Clément's quiet

bearing and habitual restraint, this naïvete was too surprising for the few society manners he had succeeded in acquiring. He burst out laughing, and the duchess, to save herself from being vexed and still more to save vexing her favorite, decided to imitate him. Lamiel's charming simplicity astonished and delighted the poor Abbé Clément, already half suffocated by the tone of falsity required at every instant in the little tower. Without knowing it, the poor abbé was falling in love with Lamiel.

It was just at the time when she wished definitely to take possession of her room in the tower. One fine morning she suddenly changed her mind, and Doctor Sansfin was astounded when, coming at eight o'clock to make his first visit, the Hautemares informed him that it was well over an hour since she had left for the castle in Madame's carriage.

The duchess was childishly joyful at her favorite's return. To be fair, one must admit that every one of Lamiel's singular proceedings induced the same ecstasy. Having something to occupy her mind, she was no longer constantly busied with bemoaning the progress of radicalism. The duchess had recovered her brilliant health and—in her consideration a most important result—the first wrinkles which had invaded her brow disappeared, and each day her complexion lost some of the yellowness with which her constant plaints were accompanied. In the evening when he entered the drawing room, the doctor was plunged in consternation. He had heard laughter

coming from it when he was in the antechamber. It was caused by Lamiel's pronunciation of English, which they had been teaching her for the last quarter of an hour. The duchess, who had spent twenty years of her youth in England during the Emigration, thought that she could speak the language; and it had occurred to the Abbé Clément, who, born at Boulogne-sur-Mer, spoke it as well as French, to teach it to Lamiel, so that when she resumed her office of reader she could read the duchess the romances of Walter Scott. The doctor saw himself lost, and as he held it a maxim that a sad hunchback who lets his sadness be seen is a man forever ruined in the drawing room where he has committed that imprudence, he hastened to take his leave and no one noticed his disappearance. The good Abbé Clément, far from confessing to himself the kind of interest he was taking in Lamiel, thought of her constantly. He supposed that later, with the duchess's obvious protection, she would marry into a settled bourgeois position. So he taught her a little of what she did not know, but which it is necessary to know, in order not to appear ridiculous in society—a smattering of history, of literature, etc., etc. This instruction was very different from Doctor Sansfin's. It was not hard, trenchant, penetrating to the principle of things, like his. It was gentle, insinuating, full of grace; always there came a little maxim, preceded by a pretty little anecdote, of which it was a sort of consequence, and the young preceptor was most careful to let his young pupil draw this conse-

quence herself. She often fell into a deep reverie which the Abbé did not know how to explain. It was when something he taught her seemed in contradiction to one of the doctor's terrible maxims. For example, according to him, society was only a bad comedy, clumsily played by graceless rogues and infamous liars; thus the duchess did not believe a word of what she said and cared for nothing but implanting maxims useful to a duchess's pretensions. A woman's good behavior, therefore, was dangerous in that, fortified by her conscience and the reality of her virtue, she permitted herself imprudences of which a prudent enemy could take advantage, while a woman who indulged all her caprices had at once the pleasure of being amused, which was the only real thing in the world, according to the doctor.

"Any number of young girls die before twenty-five," said he to Lamiel, "and then of what use is all the restraint they have imposed on themselves since they were fifteen, the deprivation of all pleasures so as to win the good opinion of eight or ten old women who compose the village's high society? Several of these old women, who in their youth behaved with the laxity common in France before Napoleon's reign, must laugh from the bottom of their hearts to see the atrocious restrictions they impose on the young girls aged sixteen in 1820! So it's doubly worth while to listen to the voice of nature and follow all one's desires, firstly because one has pleasure in it, which is the only object for which the human race was placed

here on earth; secondly because the soul fortified by pleasure, which is its true element, has the courage not to sanction any of the little comedies to which a young girl is obliged in order to gain the good opinion of the old women respected in the village or the quarter they inhabit. The danger in the doctrine of pleasure is that men's pleasure leads them ceaselessly to boast of the kindness one may have had for them. The remedy is simple and amusing: one should always plunge into despair the man who has served one's pleasure."

The doctor added a mass of detail.

"Letters must never be written, or, if that weakness has been permitted, a second letter must never be sent without the recovery of the first. Another woman must never be taken into confidence, unless there are means of punishing her for the least treason. One woman must never be friendly with another of the same age as herself.

"I am entering into the greatest detail," he added, "but see upon what detail, upon what lies, are founded the opinions which are taken as bible truths by all the old women of the town."[1]

The abbé was already so much in love, without knowing it, that he was terribly distressed by Lamiel's moments of distraction.

[1] As a relaxation from the dryness of precepts, the doctor had lent Lamiel the life of M. de Talleyrand, written by a man of keen intellect, M. Eugene Guinot. January 11th, 1840. (Note by Stendhal, Amor-Rome.)

He made his pupil read the treatise on the education of girls by the celebrated Fénelon, but Lamiel already had enough intelligence to detect how vague and inconclusive were all those gentle ideas expressed in a style so polite, so full of attentions for the learner's vanity.

"Here, for example," she said to herself, "is a grace unknown to the doctor. What a difference between his gaiety and the Abbé Clément's! Sansfin is only really gay when he sees some misfortune befall his neighbor. The good abbé, on the other hand, is full of bounty towards all."

But while she admired and even slightly loved the young priest, Lamiel pitied him when she saw him relying on the same benevolence from others. As for her, she was already a young misanthrope. The sight of the doctor had served as proof of the explanations he gave on all subjects. She believed everyone as wicked as he. One day, to amuse herself, she told the abbé that his good aunt Anselme had said the worst possible things of him to the duchess. His aunt was furious at her nephew's friendship with Lamiel, her rival in the duchess's favor. She had greatly counted on him to reduce the empire over the great lady which the young peasant had usurped. When she saw the abbé's surprised and utterly bewildered look on hearing this news, Lamiel judged him ridiculous and for long gazed at him intently. She accepted what she observed as genuine.

"He's likeable in a different way from Sansfin, but

he resembles the portrait of Madame's son; his expression is rather *shut in*." It was one of the duchess's phrases. Through living in good company, Lamiel had acquired the art of painting her ideas in words exactly chosen.

She often joked with the abbé; she was impudent to him, but in so tender a fashion that he was perfectly happy whenever he was near her. Lamiel, too, when she heard him speak, felt that it dissipated a slight return of the boredom emanating from the castle's vast rooms, so magnificent but so sad.

The duchess had remembered an English book which she had adored when she inhabited the village adjoining Hartwell House, and the Abbé Clément explained to Lamiel the insults offered to the French Revolution by a man named Burke. This individual had been won over by a splendid post in the Treasury awarded to his son. In the few private interviews with Lamiel which Sansfin still obtained, he made her understand all the absurdity in the duchess's adoration of the work. He rarely mentioned the Abbé Clément, but each of his epigrams was aimed in such a way as to attain that target. Either the young priest was an imbecile incapable of grasping the National Convention's direction of politics, or, more probably, he was a rogue like the rest of them, also seeking a good place in the Treasury or its equivalent.

Perhaps the reader conjectures that Lamiel is going to fall in love with the charming Abbé Clément, but the character that heaven had given her was inflexible,

mocking, and little susceptible to a tender sentiment. Whenever she saw the abbé, Sansfin's pleasantries came back to her, and when he reasoned in favor of the nobility or the clergy, she always answered:

"Tell me truly, Monsieur l'Abbé, what desirable place in the Treasury have you got your eye on, like M. Burke!"

But if Lamiel was little susceptible to a tender sentiment, an interesting conversation, on the other hand, had an all-powerful attraction for her, and Doctor Sansfin's too obvious malice rather shocked her still adolescent mind. She wished that the incisive force of his ideas were clothed with the perfect grace with which the abbé knew how to invest all he said. Here is Lamiel's portrait, sent about this time by the Abbé Clément to a friend left at Boulogne:

"This astonishing girl, whom you reproach me with mentioning too frequently, is not yet a beauty; she is a little too tall and too thin. Her head promises the perfection of Norman good looks with its superb, high and bold brow, its ash-blonde hair, and an admirable and perfect little nose. As to her eyes, they are blue and not large enough; her chin is narrow but slightly too long. Her face is oval, and its only flaw seems to me to be the mouth, which is turned down a little at the corners like a pike's. But this young soul's mistress, who, although over forty-five, has lately entered on a Saint Martin's summer, so continually harps on the girl's real faults that I am almost insensible to them."

TEN

What is Love?

WHEN THERE occurred a visit from one of the noble ladies of the district, the young priest and the little reader, who was a bourgeois and even less, were not judged worthy to hear the secrets of the *ultra* party.

The July Decrees, of which many of the great houses in Normandy had the secret, were being prepared. On those occasions our friends, the two personages mentioned, went to admire the graces of a magnificent white parrot, attached to his perch by a little silver chain, near a window at the end of the drawing room. They were visible but out of earshot. The poor abbé blushed, but soon Lamiel's conversation was more animated than ever. In Madame's presence it would have been lacking in respect to speak of subjects not introduced by her. Finding herself alone with the abbé, the young girl overwhelmed him with all sorts of questions on every topic which roused her curiosity; she was perfectly happy herself, although she greatly embarrassed her interlocutor. For example, she one day said to him:

"There is an enemy against whom all the good

books that Madame makes me read for my education tend to warn me; yet I am never told clearly what it is. Well, Monsieur l'Abbé, will you in whom I have so much confidence tell me what is love?"

Until then the conversation had been so candid and simple that the young priest, whom his own love made inattentive, had not the presence of mind to reply that he did not know what love was; he answered thoughtlessly:

"It is a tender and devoted friendship which makes it a supreme happiness to pass one's life with the loved object."

"But in the novels of Mme. de Genlis, which Madame makes me read, one always sees a man in love with a woman. Two sisters, for instance, who pass their lives together, have the most tender friendship for each other, yet one wouldn't call that being in love."

"That is because love must be sanctified by marriage," answered the young priest, "and it quickly becomes a criminal passion if it is not consecrated by a sacrament."

"Then," replied Lamiel in all innocence, yet well aware that she was about to embarrass him, "you, Monsieur le Curé, cannot fall in love because you cannot be married?"

This was delivered with such spirit and accompanied by so singular a look, that the poor priest stood motionless, his staring eyes fixed on her.

"Does she know the force of what she says?" he

asked himself. "If she does, I ought not to come to the castle so often; her extreme confidence in me is very like love and seems to be leading to it."

The delightful idea possessed his mind for quite twenty seconds, then with horror he said to himself:

"Good God! What have I done? I am not only yielding to a passion in my case culpable, but, still worse, I expose myself to seducing a young girl whose virtue is entrusted to me by an understanding tacit, indeed, but therefore none the less sacred."

"My daughter!" he exclaimed with the voice he used from the pulpit, and so very loudly as to cause the duchess and the two ladies with whom she was conversing to raise their heads. After which words the young priest, as though exhausted by the effort he had just made, drew himself up again to his full height, much to Lamiel's astonishment and even amusement.

"I have stung his sense of honor," she said to herself. "There must be something very extraordinary about the word 'Love!' "

While she was making that quick reflection, the Abbé Clément found courage again.

"My daughter," he said, moderating his voice, "my ministry absolutely forbids my discussing the question of love with you. All that I can say is that such folly dishonors a woman if she lets it last more than forty days (the same duration as Lent), without consecrating it by the sacrament of marriage. Men, on the other hand, are the more esteemed in the world, the

more young girls or women they dishonor. Thus, when a young man talks of love to a young girl, she tries to keep it a secret, while he, who in such cases is called the seducer, pretends to do the same, but only asks for discovery. He attempts to retain his mistress and at the same time let the world guess the victory he has won over her prudence. So it is true to say that a young girl's worst enemy is the young man who speaks to her of love. However, I will not hide the facts. To escape the state of passive obedience in which a girl finds herself in relation to her mother, and so as to command in her turn, it is natural for her to try to get married. But that is a very dangerous moment. A girl may then forever lose her reputation. She must always heed well the interests of vanity on the side of the young man who pays court to her; for there are only two ways of playing a very distinguished part in society—one must have shown valor either in war or in duels with other young men of good position, or one must have seduced a large number of remarkably beautiful and wealthy women."

Here Lamiel was on sure ground; twenty times over, the doctor had explained the conduct enabling a girl merrily to spend a youth which death might cut short, yet without losing the regard of the old women where she lived. Lamiel slyly looked at the curé, then said:

"But what does *to seduce* mean, Monsieur?"

"For a man, it means talking to a young girl too often and with an ulterior motive."

"But, for instance," cunningly asked Lamiel, "are you seducing me?"

"No, pray Heaven!" replied the young priest, aghast; and, an extreme redness succeeding the mortal pallor which for some moments had covered his face, he seized her hand with ardor, then pushed her away with a ferocious gesture that seemed most extraordinary to her. The abbé, resuming his pulpit voice, added in a high tone:

"I cannot seduce you, because I cannot marry you: but every girl is dishonored—and probably damned—who lets herself talk about love or friendship—the name makes no difference—for more than forty days, and who fails to ask the man who pretends to love her whether he intends to consecrate his sentiments by the sacrament of marriage."

"But what if the man who feels friendship for the girl is already married?"

"That is the terrible sin of *adultery,* which is a young man's glory and in France gives him his rank. But while the glory is his, the wretched adulteress is obliged to live by herself in the country, and usually in misery. When she enters a drawing room, all the women, and even those as culpable as she, pointedly move away from her. In this world her existence is abominable, and with her heart filled with hatred and spite, she is most likely damned in the next; thus her life is abominable on earth, and after death, the most fearful torments await her."

This picture seemed to touch the young girl deeply, then, a moment later, she said to herself:

"But is there a Hell? And is it eternal? And would God be good if he made an eternal Hell? For, after all, the moment I was born, God knew quite well that I would live, say, fifty years, and that I would be eternally damned at the end of that time. Wouldn't it have been better to make me die at once? What a difference in thoroughness and interest there is between the doctor's reasoning and the curé's! But I must answer him, or he'll think I'm unable to." She went on aloud, with an air of great boredom:

"I understand quite well that I mustn't talk day after day, and certainly not with friendliness, to a married man or a priest; but if I do feel friendly towards one, what am I to do?"

At these words Abbé Clément pulled out his watch with a convulsive gesture.

"I have to visit a sick person," he said, haggard-eyed. "Good-bye, Mademoiselle." And he fled, forgetting to take leave of the duchess, who was very shocked at the *little priestling's* lack of respect.

"Doesn't that man belong to you?" asked the Marquise de Pauville, who was seated on her right.

"He's no less than the nephew of my *femme de chambre,*" answered the duchess with a disdainful smile.

"A little priestling!" cried the Baronne de Bruny, seated on her left.

This name *little priestling,* flung so contemptuously

at the poor Abbé Clément, who had such nice hair, secured his position in Lamiel's heart.

Instead of reflecting on the poverty of his arguments compared with Doctor Sansfin's, which were as firm as granite, she saw him as a young man full of naïvete and compelled by his poverty to make ridiculous assertions which possibly he disbelieved. Did Burke, she asked herself, believe in the absurd arguments he launched against France? "No," she exclaimed, interrupting herself, "my abbé is honest."

Then she remained deeply pensive, not knowing how to prove this statement, and yet seeing quite well that the conversation just concluded had placed her, with regard to that charming man, in a really extraordinary position. At the end of a quarter of an hour she was delighted with this idea, for everything that was food for her mind made her happy, and in this case she had the task of guessing what could have troubled the young abbé to such a point. Lamiel had never before seen him so good-looking.

"What a contrast," she thought, "between his countenance and Sansfin's! I asked him what love was. Well, without meaning to, he's shown me. I must make up my mind. Is he in love with me? He sees me every day, and always with the greatest pleasure; he talks to me with sincere and lively friendship. For example, I am sure he would rather speak to me than to the duchess, although she knows so much! She has such flattering ways for the person to whom her words are addressed! Yes, but Sansfin says the malice that's

in a woman's heart always appears in her behavior and the duchess is indeed malicious. The other day when the Comtesse de Sainte-Foi's carriage overturned on her way home from here, the duchess was pleased, but it made me cry. I know she had that bad feeling about it, for Mlle. Anselme noticed it as well as me and joked about it with the other maid. But, assuming that Abbé Clément is in love with me, what, once again, is love?"

The reader will perhaps find this an absurd question on the part of a young girl of sixteen, still surrounded by the coarse humor of rustic evenings; but in the first place, Lamiel had no intimate friends among the girls of her age, and secondly, she rarely took part in such evenings. The girls of her age called her *The Learned Lady* and did their best to play tricks on her. It happened that Mme. Hautemare's cottage was the center of village society; there assembled all the pious dames, who, as often as they could, brought their daughters with them. Mme. Hautemare was very proud to be the chief figure of the assembly, and in the hope of the village girls joining it, she insisted on Lamiel staying at home. It enchanted the curé Du Saillard that an opportunity should arise for the evenings to be spent decorously. Those country curés allow themselves strange liberties. Du Saillard went so far as to recommend the gatherings at Mme. Hautemare's from the pulpit. All this took place before Lamiel had been called to the castle. When, with her health as an excuse, Doctor Sansfin

caused her return to the cottage, she had acquired many more ideas, and then the conversation of the mischievous, pious old women could hardly be anything but dangerous for a young girl of her age, since, while they were busily slandering the village girls, they often catalogued their crimes in very clear detail and in various degrees of guilt. The devout women discussed between themselves how much they should credit the girls with sin, and there were frequently observations of an extreme impropriety. But Lamiel's profound ignorance kept her safe; her thoughts were constantly occupied with problems of a higher order; she was quite incapable of the ceaseless hypocrisy without which it was impossible, said the doctor, to achieve success. Nothing bored her so much as the management of a humble household, as practiced by Mme. Hautemare; she felt utter repugnance at the notion of marrying a worthy villager of Carville; the object of all her desire was to go to Rouen when the duchess no longer protected her, and there gain a living by doing the accounts in a shop. She had no disposition towards making love; what above all she required was interesting conversation. A tale of war, or of heroes braving great danger and accomplishing difficult feats, set her dreaming for three days, while she only gave passing attention to a love story. What discredited love in her esteem was that she saw the stupidest women in the village entirely giving themselves up to it. When the duchess made her read the hypocritical romances of Mme. de Genlis, they in no wise touched

her heart; she found the questions of *good taste,* which caused Mme. de Miossens to interrupt the reading, ridiculous and banal. Lamiel only paid attention to the obstacles encountered by the heroes in the course of their love. When they went to dream of their ladies in the depths of forests illumined by the moon's pale ray, she thought of the risk they ran of being surprised by brigands armed with daggers, whose exploits she read each day in the *Quotidienne*. Yet, in fact, she was interested less in the danger than the shock of the moment of surprise when suddenly, from behind a clump of trees, a pair of ragged, brutal ruffians threw themselves on the hero.

What we have just remarked about Lamiel would have been impossible with regard to the peasant girls who went every Sunday in their finery to the village dance.

Round the dancing were couples walking under the trees and tenderly holding each other's hands. Lamiel had not failed to notice several of those couples and was appalled that they thus made a public show of themselves; it was all she knew of love's secret when she went back to the cottage. Then the worthy Hautemare thought it incumbent on him to explain the danger more positively. He frequently spoke to her of the terrible sin of walking in the wood with a young man.

"Very well! I *will* go and walk in the wood with one," she resolved.

Such was the result of the long reflections following her conversation with the Abbé Clément.

"I want to know absolutely what love is," she said to herself. "My uncle calls it a great crime, but what do I care for such an imbecile's opinion? It's like the great crime my aunt Hautemare discovered in putting the meat broth in Friday's soup: it was a sore offense to God; yet by paying twenty francs, the duchess eats meat all the year round, and so do her servants and I among them, and it's not a sin at all! It must be confessed that everything my poor foster parents say is frightfully stupid. What a difference from the doctor! That poor young curé, Clément, for his entire wages, only gets a hundred and fifty francs a year. I very well perceive that, since he's been in love with me, Mlle. Anselme has left off giving him presents. On his saint's day she only handed out six ells of black cloth, and even that was the remains of the mourning for the duke. It's true he gets a few gifts from Madame, and a little game or poultry from the peasants; but like the subprefect, M. de Bermude, he probably has to say all sorts of things so as not to be dismissed. What long speeches in favor of the Government poor M. de Bermude doles out! Well, all of a sudden—bang! And out he goes for not talking at election time as his Minister told him. 'What folly! How stupid,' said Madame. 'The declarations he should have made were rubbish devoid of all common sense; but for him,' she added, 'they had the sense of saving his post, and now Ber-

mude is reduced to vegetating on eight hundred francs a year. That's what happens to the little bourgeois who try to masquerade as ancient Romans.' "

This drew Lamiel into a sequence of sublime meditations which led her far from the practical idea of walking in the wood with a young man of her choice from whom she would demand a definition of love.

ELEVEN

Fédor

LAMIEL'S FIRST sentiment on being confronted with a virtue was to believe it a hypocrisy.

"The world," Sansfin told her, "is not divided, as ninnies think, into rich and poor, the virtuous and the evil, but simply into dupes and rogues; that is the key to the nineteenth century since Napoleon's fall. For," he added, "*personal bravery and firmness of character* give no hold to hypocrisy; how can a man be a hypocrite when he hurls himself against the crenellated wall of a country cemetery defended by two hundred men? Apart from deeds like that, my dear friend, never believe a word of all the virtues with which your ears are assailed. The duchess, for example, is always talking about kindness; it is, according to her, the greatest of virtues. The true motive of her admiration is that, like all women of her rank, she prefers to deal with dupes rather than rogues; that is the whole secret of the pretended social code of which women of her position are always talking. But you mustn't believe what I tell you. Apply the rule that I am laying down to me; who knows whether I haven't

some interest in deceiving you? I have often enough told you that, surrounded as I am with boors to whom one must always lie so as not to be a victim of the brutal force at their command, it is my good fortune to find in you a being filled with natural genius. Cultivate that genius and dare to tell yourself that for me the truth is a charming entertainment and a relief from what I do all day to gain a living. Perhaps all I'm saying is a lie. So don't believe in me blindly but take note whether perchance my words are not the truth. Thus, was it a lie when I made you notice an incident that occurred yesterday evening? The duchess is forever talking about kindness, and yesterday evening and this morning she has been altogether delighted at the accident to her dear friend, Mme. de Sainte-Foi whose horses threw her into a ditch the day before yesterday, when she was driving back to her house a league away."

After these words, Sansfin disappeared. Such was his manner with Lamiel; he wanted her, above all, to take the trouble to think. After his departure, she said to herself:

"I don't know what he's after, but as to firmness of character, I can both see it in others and hope to practice it myself."

She did not deceive herself; nature had given her the right sort of spirit for despising weakness. At the same time, love attempted its first attack on her heart. She turned her mind on the Abbé Clément again, and it was not a logical sequence which led her to consider

that amiable young man. He was very pale. The black coat he had made with Mlle. Anselme's present of the six ells of cloth seemed to make him thinner and increased the tender pity he inspired in Lamiel. What would her joy not have been, could she have discussed with him the severe principles for which she was indebted to the doctor's great wisdom!

"But perhaps," she added, "all that the Abbé Clément says against love is spoken by order of the Archbishop of Rouen, and he would otherwise lose his place. In those circumstances, he is quite right to say what he does, but I should be a fool, at whom he would laugh from the bottom of his heart, were I to believe his least little word. When he talks of English literature it's altogether different and doesn't concern his bishop, who is perhaps ignorant of English. There is a desire to deceive me on all that relates to love, and yet not a day passes without my reading something about it. Are those who make love in the dupes' class or that of intelligent people?"

Lamiel put this question to her oracle, but Doctor Sansfin had too much sense to answer precisely.

"Take note, my fair friend," said he, "that I flatly refuse to answer the question. But remember that it is extremely dangerous for you to seek enlightenment; it is like the terrible secret of the *Thousand and One Nights,* those tales which amuse you so much. When the hero wants light, a huge bird swoops down on him from the sky and pecks out one of his eyes."

Lamiel was very vexed at this withholding of information.

"They wish to deceive me on all that relates to love; then I must no longer ask for explanations, but only believe what I see for myself."

The warning of extreme danger, which the prudent doctor had insinuated into his reply, appealed to Lamiel's daring.

"Let me see if I feel the danger," she exclaimed. "The only practical thing I know about love is what my uncle tried to teach me when he kept on saying that I mustn't go into the wood with a young man. Well, I'll go, and we'll see what happens. And in regard to my little Abbé Clément, I'm going to be twice as friendly to him, so as to make him wild. He was very funny yesterday, when he pulled his watch out so angrily; if I'd dared, I'd have kissed him. What would he have looked like then?"

Lamiel was at the height of her curiosity about love when one day, on entering the duchess's drawing room, she abruptly interrupted a conversation with Mlle. Anselme relating to herself. A messenger had arrived from Paris during the night; it was the eve of the proclamation of the July Decrees, and an intimate friend had sent news on the subject which made the duchess tremble for her son. The force encamped at Saint Omer was about to march on the capital to suppress the great conspiracy of the Opposition deputies. She sent the messenger back to inform her son that she was daily growing weaker and to demand what

would perhaps be a last token of his affection; he was to leave Paris exactly two hours after getting her letter and to come to Carville for a week.

The École Polytechnique was one of the poor duke's mistakes; it was republican even under Napoleon. God knows if the gentlemen of the Left would have neglected to fanaticize it!

"A republican Duc de Miossens," cried the duchess in disgust. "That would truly be a fine thing!"

But hardly two hours after the duchess had sent the messenger back with the greatest secrecy, the doctor knew that the young duke was coming to the castle. It was one of the events he most feared.

"He is a very handsome young man; he wears a uniform, and that alone would be enough to bring Napoleon before Lamiel's eyes, and may deprive me of my charming young friend. I have already had trouble enough to save her from that little Abbé Clément, whose timid virtue acted on my behalf. I certainly can't count on the same restraint from the young duke, whom his scamp of a valet leads by the nose. This valet is quite capable of giving a hint on the matter to my little Lamiel, and then I shall have been at pains to form an intelligent woman in order to make her meetings with the young duke more exciting."

Two hours later the venerable Hautemare appeared at the castle in his Sunday best. His arrival at eight o'clock in the evening started a commotion. He pealed the entrance bell for nearly a quarter of an hour be-

fore Saint-Jean, the aged *valet de chambre* in charge of the outer gates, decided to acknowledge that someone was ringing. The duchess was beginning to imagine that it was the sound of a funeral bell.

"Something has happened in Paris," she exclaimed. "Which side has my son chosen? God, what a misfortune that M. de Polignac ever became Minister. It's the fate of our poor Bourbons to call every imbecile into their counsels. Yet they had M. de Villèle; it's true he was a bourgeois, but that made him understand all the better the bourgeois who attack the Court. The École Polytechnique will have been led to the Tuileries with their cannons, and the wretched children, carried away by a few flattering words from the King, are going to defend the Palace, like the Swiss Guards on August the Tenth."

In her impatience, the duchess rang for all her maids; half-dressed, she opened her window and rushed on the grand balcony.

"Saint-Jean! Saint-Jean! Will you make up your mind to open at last?"

"Good heavens, Madame!" answered the bad-tempered old *valet de chambre*. "This is a fine time to let anyone in! I don't want to get bitten."

"Are you afraid of being bitten by the people besieging the gate? And who are they, in any case?"

"That's likely, isn't it?" said the old man, filled with anger. "It's those dogs of yours who'd be at my heels. What an idea, getting those horrible English bulldogs! Once they bite, they never let go."

A good quarter of an hour went in the waking and dressing of Lovel, the English servant, who, alone, was supposed to be obeyed by the bulldogs, his compatriots. In that time, the peals at the bell redoubled. Hautemare, who was ringing away, imagined that he was being refused entrance. This increase of sound, the barking of the dogs, Saint-Jean's grumbling and Lovel's oaths changed the duchess's great alarm into an attack of nerves. Her maids had to put her to bed and make her sniff smelling salts.

"My son is dead," she cried. "When the messenger got back to Paris, he must have found the Revolution already started."

She was plunged in such thoughts when it was announced that the cause of the turmoil was only the verger from the village, whose impertinence had roused the whole castle.

"I don't know what stops me," said Saint-Jean on opening to him. "If I said the word to the Englishman, he could make his brutes devour you."

"I'm not so sure," replied the schoolmaster indignantly. "I never go out at night without the saber and the pistol given me by the duke."

The duchess, who heard the end of their dialogue, was on the point of fainting anew, and this time with rage, when Hautemare, himself extremely angry, at last made his appearance in her bedroom.

"Madame, with all respect, I insist on having my niece Lamiel back again. It is not proper for her to pass the night under the same roof as your son, who

would think it a joke to dishonor a respectable family."

"What, Master Verger! The first word you say to me after turning the whole castle upside down at this unseemly hour isn't an apology! You come here in the middle of the night as if you were entering the village square!"

"Your Grace the Duchesse de Miossens," answered the choirmaster with an air greatly lacking in respect, "I must ask you to excuse me, and beg you to give my niece Lamiel back to me at once. Mme. Hautemare does not wish her to see your son."

"What's that you say about my son?" cried the duchess frantically.

"I'm saying that he may be here tomorrow morning, and that we don't want him to set eyes on our niece."

"Good God!" thought the duchess. "The conspiracy in Paris has even perverted this village. I mustn't quarrel with this insolent fellow. He has authority with the mob. What I had better do, is to go and pass the rest of the night in my tower. Rouen will be given up to fire and slaughter like Paris. I won't be safe at Rouen, I must seek refuge at Le Havre. In that town there are plenty of merchants with big shops filled with goods, and though at heart they are confirmed Jacobins it will be to their interest, for some hours, to prevent pillaging. My cousin, Mme. de la Rochefoucault, was assassinated at the beginning of the Revolution because the people knew beforehand that she was trying to get post horses. I must win over this fellow

Hautemare. Such folk go on their knees to a golden louis, and I'll give him twenty-five, if need be, to find me post horses."

The duchess kept silent while she gave audience to all these ideas. Hautemare, greatly angered by all the questioning he had undergone from her servants, was interpreting her silence as a refusal.

"Madame," he said to her insolently, "give me back my niece. Don't force me to seek her with all my bell ringers, and with them, if need be, all the friends I have in the village."

These words decided the duchess; she cast him a terrible glance, filled with hate, then said in honeyed tones:

"My dear Monsieur Hautemare, how you mistake me! I want to give you back your niece. I was only thinking that the freshness of the night might make her chest much worse. Ask them, please, to put the horses to the carriage, and ask Mlle. Anselme to help Lamiel to dress; I'll get dressed myself."

With a violent gesture she pointed Hautemare to the door. He did his best to keep up an angry front. He was quite determined not to go home without his niece, picturing to himself the frightful scene of which he would be the object on Mme. Hautemare's part, should she see him arrive without Lamiel.

At last he went out. The duchess flung herself against the door and shot the three bolts. When she had carefully done this, she enjoyed a moment's relief.

"The time has come," she exclaimed. "Well, now for my diamonds, my gold and the false passport furnished me by the obliging doctor!"

At that moment, she was very energetic; she needed no help to open the little trap door, kept closed by one of the feet of her bed. At that place there was a gap in the carpet, joined by only a little thin stitching, which she easily tore apart. A very ordinary small box contained her diamonds; the gold was more of a difficulty; she had five or six livres, besides some banknotes which she hid in her corset with the diamonds; she finally put the gold in her sleeve. This was all done in five minutes. She ran to Lamiel's room and found her with tears in her eyes. Mlle. Anselme had been brutally reproaching the girl because of her uncle's indiscretion in waking the castle at so preposterous an hour.

The sight of Lamiel's tears made the duchess forget all her fears for herself; she was so courageous at that instant as to burst out laughing heartily when Lamiel asked her what progress the fire was making. Mlle. Anselme having answered her questions only with insults, she firmly believed that the castle was on fire.

"It is simply," the duchess told her, "that the Revolution has started again in the village; but I'm not worried, my dear. I have eight hundred thousand francs' worth of diamonds on me, and also gold and bank notes. We will go to Le Havre for safety and from there, at the worst, we can spend a fortnight in

England; and so long as I have you with me, I shall be as happy as I am here."

In spite of her tenderness and her passionate friendship for Lamiel, the duchess thought it a very good move not to mention her son. Her real intention was to pass a few hours in the tower, and there to await the moment of Fédor's arrival at Carville. In any case, if the people there were in a savage mood, she would go up the main road for two or three leagues and return to the outskirts of the village by night, for her son to join her. Lamiel was filled with admiration for the duchess's dauntless courage.

"These great ladies are really our superiors. Of course I shouldn't be afraid of going to the high street and square at Carville, while all the young men of the region were shouting 'Hurrah for Napoleon' or 'Hurrah for the Republic.' If they insisted on wrecking Madame's carriage, I'd give her my arm and we'd proudly leave the village. Yvon and Mathieu, the two chief bell ringers, would obey me in everything, and Yvon's as strong as Hercules. So I'm not afraid; I'm serious and alert, while Madame finds time to say the most charming things and keep us laughing."

The duchess was admirably calm. She handed a thousand francs in crown pieces to Mlle. Anselme and Saint-Jean, asking them to divide that sum between all the servants. She commanded that no one was to follow her. Several times and with emphasis she repeated that she would be back in two days. The horses

were put to the landau with its splendid coat of arms; she had the foresight to order them to be unharnessed and put to the brougham, since, without armorial bearings, it would be less noticed by the populace. Finally, she and Lamiel entered the carriage, accompanied by Hautemare alone, who, exhausted by the effort of maintaining his anger a whole hour, and in fear of the scene awaiting him at home if he appeared without his niece, in his weakness had tears in his eyes and no longer knew what he was saying.

As she entered the carriage, the duchess had time to say to Lamiel:

"Don't tell that man anything of our plans; he has perhaps been made rabid by the Jacobins."

Lamiel was the first to remark, when they were five hundred yards from the castle:

"It all seems very quiet, Madame."

Soon they were in the village high street. The town hall lantern was quietly flaming and the only sound the ladies heard was the snoring of a man asleep in his first-floor bedroom, eight feet above the ground. Mme. de Miossens burst into a peal of laughter and threw herself into the arms of Lamiel, who was weeping with affection and sympathy. For some minutes, Mme. de Miossens entirely surrendered to her gaiety. Hautemare opened his eyes wide.

"I must allay that man's suspicions," said the duchess to herself.

"Well, my dear Hautemare, aren't you pleased with me for quite calmly bringing your niece back to her

dear aunt's? You've got the keys to the tower; go and open the room on the second floor for us and light the fire. I shall go to bed again, and if Mme. Hautemare permits," she said, in a tone of irony which passed unperceived by the schoolmaster, "so that I shan't be afraid of ghosts, I shall want Lamiel to have the little camp bed."

The reader has doubtless observed that the duchess prudently refrained from asking Hautemare how he knew of Fédor's return to Carville.

"It's tied up with Jacobin propaganda. He'd be sure to tell me a lie; it's better not to put him on his guard. I'll find it all out from little Lamiel."

Hautemare, once assured that his wife would make no scene, felt very ashamed of the unmannerly way in which he had spoken to the duchess. As for his wife, altogether reconciled by the noble lady's extreme politeness in deigning personally to bring back her niece, she had no objection to letting Lamiel mount quickly after the duchess and dressed herself in order to make tea. The worthy couple deemed it best not to come and pay formal compliment to her Grace. Hautemare took the tea up to the second-floor room, asked for Madame's orders and took his leave with innumerable and very profound reverences.

TWELVE

News from Paris

THE LADIES laughed heartily at their fears and slept quietly after listening for half an hour to the deep silence which reigned in the village. Next day the duchess did not wake before nine o'clock and, a moment after, her son Fédor was in her arms.

That day was July 28, 1830. Fédor, arriving at seven in the morning, would not let his mother be roused. He was in extremely low spirits.

"If the disturbance has continued," he thought, "my comrades will call me a deserter. Once I have embraced my mother, I must obtain her permission to return to Paris."

Lamiel, on beholding this very troubled young man, tightly packed in his uniform, discovered in him a certain nullity of aspect which excluded the idea of strength and even of courage. Fédor was thin and slight; he had a pleasant face, but just then his great fear of passing for a deserter deprived him of any definite expression, and Lamiel found him very like his portrait.

"So that's the little peasant," he said to himself,

"who, with her Norman slyness and calculated compliance, has managed to win my mother's favor and—what's more—to keep it."

Since all that surrounded Fédor—the kitchen of the cottage in which she caught her first glimpse of him, and Uncle Hautemare and his wife, still sad at the idea of having exposed themselves to a drying-up of the source whence flowed the little gifts with which the duchess flooded them—since this environment was too familiar and boring for Lamiel, all her attention, in spite of herself, was concentrated on the young soldier, so insignificant and pale and apparently very harassed. Thus took place the event which Doctor Sansfin had pictured to himself with such alarm. At each moment, Mme. Hautemare approached her niece to mutter:

"Why don't you do the honors of the house? Since you're so intelligent, talk to this young duke, or he'll think we're just boorish peasants."

These and a good many similar remarks were uttered in low tones, but in such a way that Fédor could plainly hear them. Lamiel tried in vain to make her aunt understand that it would be much better to leave the young traveller to himself. Mme. Hautemare's urgent instructions were not lost on Fédor and all his bad temper, which was considerable, he directed upon M. and Mme. Hautemare. Gradually he was happy to perceive that Lamiel had lovely hair, and that she would have been very pretty were she not slightly sunburnt by the country climate. Then he

noted with pleasure that she had none of the air of deceit and the little sugary simperings of a scheming village girl. Mme. Hautemare went up the tower stairs every quarter of an hour to listen at the duchess's door in case she was awake. During these climbs Fédor remained alone with Lamiel, and the instincts of youth overcoming the ideas which made him fear a deserter's reputation, he gazed at her attentively, and she, on her side, was talking to him with all the interest inspired by a lively curiosity, when Doctor Sansfin entered the kitchen which furnished the scene of their interview. The doctor's attitude was a picture; he stood like a man halted in the act of walking, with his mouth open and his eyes immoderately staring.

"It must be acknowledged," said Fédor to himself, "that this is a notably ugly hunchback; but it's said that he and this very remarkable little girl completely control my mother's will. Let me try to court them, so as to get her permission to return to Paris."

With this resolve the young duke entered into animated conversation with the country doctor. He began with an impassioned recital of the first disturbances which, at midnight on the 26th, had broken out in the garden of the Palais Royal, near the Café Lemblin. Two pupils of the École Polytechnique, who happened to be in the café at the moment when the famous Decrees were being read aloud, had run to the École Polytechnique and very exactly related to their comrades what they had witnessed. The doctor listened with his emotion energetically portrayed by his ex-

pressive features; without doubt, he was overjoyed to think of the disaster that might befall the Bourbons. The insolence of the nobles and priests was bound to have been felt acutely by a man who believed that nature had created him a god. His imagination played with rapture on the humiliations about to be suffered by that House of Bourbon, which for a century had protected the strong against the weak.

"Is it not they," Sansfin meditated, "who have given the name of Rabble to the class in which I was born? For them, everything that is intelligent is suspect. So be it! But if this beginning of an insurrection has any serious result, if those ridiculous Parisians have the courage to take courage, old Charles X may be forced to abdicate, and the rabble class, to which I belong, will make a step forward. We shall become a respectable bourgeoisie which the Court will have to give itself the trouble of cajoling."

Then, of a sudden, Sansfin remembered the good position which he had won for himself with the Church:

"I am on the eve of getting a place," he went on, "if I care to ask for one. All the grand houses in the region would give fifty or a hundred louis each, according to their degree of avarice, could I be high and swiftly hung; but meanwhile I see in myself the only agent through whom they can communicate with the people. I play on their terror as Lamiel plays on her piano. I stir them and calm them almost as I choose. If they are completely victorious, the most rabid

among them, those who form the inner circle, will obtain the others' consent to throwing me in prison. Has not the Vicomte de Saxile, that young fellow who is so well made and so proud of his ruffian's physique, declared in front of me, to his noble associates of the casino, that it amounts to Jacobinism to speak with so much complacency of the means of action commanded by the Jacobins. So, if the Parisians' revolt, despite the featherheadedness of those poor chatterboxes, has enough spirit really to damage the Bourbons, I stand to lose the credit I have so painfully acquired with all the grand houses and the priests of the district during the last six years. Other men of power will arise among the people, and I should have to perform a miracle of intelligence to become associated with the display of brute force. If the Court party triumphs, and has fifty liberal deputies shot, I shall have to fly to Le Havre, and perhaps on to England, for the Vicomte de Saxile will want me thrown into prison at once. At least my papers will be examined, to see whether I am not in league with the Paris liberals. This young idiot wishes to go back to his École Polytechnique; I must press the duchess to consent, and will myself become the young man's guide. I will go with him to Paris and send off messengers to his mother twice a day, while in reality I shall be busy trying to join up with whichever side wins. Those Parisians are so stupid that, naturally, the Court will wriggle its way out with promises; when the people are no loger angry, they are powerless; and in a week,

the anger of the Parisians will cease. In that case, I gain the favor of the chiefs of the Catholic party and return to Carville as one of their envoys. It will then be my task to make all the asses in the party comprehend that the Vicomte de Saxile is a lunatic capable of ruining the cause. Thus, at least, I save myself from the prison into which the scoundrel wants me cast. So I must flatter this little idiot duke so as to be acceptable as his travelling companion."

In the course of these reflections Sansfin had started to flatter the young noble, by drawing him out to give innumerable details of the spirit animating the École Polytechnique, and by extolling Monge, Le Grange and the other great men who were its founders. Those great men were Fédor's gods, who gave battle in his heart to all the prejudices of birth carefully nourished by his parents. He was very proud to be a duke, but thought of his title twice a day, while twenty times a day he meditated with rapture on his good fortune in passing for one of the École's best pupils.

When Mme. Hautemare came to announce that at last it was light in the duchess's room, Fédor had begun to look on the doctor as a man of great intelligence, while Lamiel's respect for him was redoubled by the genius with which he ingratiated himself with the young man. He had managed to say to her, in the moment while the duke was placing a magnificent bouquet of rare flowers from Paris at the door of the room occupied by his mother:

"The hardest thing in the world is to please some-

body one despises; I really don't know if I shall succeed in winning this little dukeling's approval."

Fédor went up to his mother. The doctor had his visits to make and also wanted to get the duchess to tell him everything her son said to her. Naturally, they would be alone together for this recital, which would give him the chance to inspire her with the wish to send him to Paris with her son.

But when he returned an hour later, he found her weeping and almost in an attack of nerves. She did not even wish her son's return to be mentioned.

"Either this revolt is nothing"—each word was interrupted with a hysterical shudder—"either this revolt is nothing, and then your absence won't be noticed—you've come to see your mother who's ill, and nothing can be more simple. Or otherwise this revolt becomes a matter of standing firm until the thirty thousand men at Saint Omer reach Paris. In that case I don't wish a Miossens to be numbered among the king's enemies; your career would be ruined beyond recovery. Well, in all-important circumstances I take your father's place, and I give you formal orders not to leave me by one step."

After very firmly pronouncing this last phrase, she insisted that her son, who had driven posthaste all night, should get a couple of hours' sleep and throw himself on his bed, at the castle.

Left alone with the doctor, she said to him:

"Our unhappy Bourbons will be betrayed as usual. You'll see that the Jacobins will win over the troops at

Saint Omer. Their machinations are unfathomable, at any rate by me. For instance, my dear friend, tell me how, at eight o'clock yesterday evening, that fellow Hautemare knew that my son was going to arrive from Paris? Not to a soul had I mentioned the letter to Fédor, which I had given to the Duc de R——'s messenger, and my son has just shown it to me. For a quarter of an hour we examined the seal; it was quite intact when my son broke it."

The doctor devoted infinite art to concurring with the duchess's ideas; he followed his trade as doctor. His object was to calm her agitated nerves, and he knew from Fédor himself all there was to learn of the revolt starting in Paris. He found the duchess rampant as a *tigress*—it was the simile he used in recounting the conversation to Lamiel.

But it was to his interest only to be found at Carville when the result of the July revolt was definitely known. The duchess soon had a suggestion: her son's nerves were in a very bad state; the young man was working too hard, like all the École Polytechnique's pupils; he needed a fortnight's sea bathing, but it was necessary to avoid Dieppe, a town captivated by the Duchesse de Berri's charm and which would soon be the target of Jacobin suspicion. The obvious solution was to go to the sea at Le Havre; the tradesmen, trembling for their shops, would allow no pillaging there, if the Jacobins got the upper hand; and if the Court triumphed, which the doctor considered very likely, it would be impossible for the malicious deni-

zens of the neighboring mansions to attach any ridicule to the duchess's little trip. Fédor's thinness and pallor showed well enough that his health was jeopardized by overworking; it was exceedingly hot and he was obeying the advice of his doctor, who prescribed sea bathing. The duchess did not wish to wait for a ball dress and some hats, which she would have had to order from Paris. Fédor had always expressed the desire, not to make a stay in England—he hadn't the time for that—but to spend a day or two in that singular country. Well, from Le Havre one could go and pass a few days at Portsmouth.

THIRTEEN

Departure

ALL THESE arrangements were put in motion immediately after the doctor had inspired the duchess with her idea. She discovered a great advantage in it: Le Havre was much further from Paris than Carville, and, in the second place, she believed that she would be unrecognized on the journey there. As she was really ill, she never left the tower; but all preparations for the road were made at the castle, and at eight in the evening, just as the post horses arrived at the tower, a mail coach decked with tricolor flags came into view on the highway from Paris.

"God! how thankful I am that I entirely trusted you, my dear doctor!" cried the duchess, as she took her place in the landau with her son and Sansfin.

She was also grateful to him for not taking an inside seat. Fédor, put out by such politeness, insisted on sitting beside the driver when they were a league from the village. The doctor was extremely happy; he would be away from Carville at the moment when the final result of the revolt in Paris was known there,

while for a long time he had prevented further conversations between the elegant young duke and the gentle and charming Lamiel.

On their way the travellers found nothing but curiosity. Everybody asked them the news from Paris. A counter-demand for news was their reply, on the pretext that they had just come from nearby in the country. On reaching the post station at Le Havre, the duchess proudly displayed a passport in the names of Mme. *Miaussante* and her son. She had compelled him to discard his uniform, and the young man was in despair.

"So during battle," he said to himself, "the Duc de Miossens not only deserts, but abandons his uniform!"

When they were hardly installed at Le Havre in a private house known to the doctor, he engaged a lady's maid and two servants who had never heard of Mme. de Miaussante. Thus it was at Le Havre, and free from all personal anxiety, that the duchess spent the first days of the despair caused by the incredible result of the July revolution. When she knew that the king was an exile in England, she embarked for Portsmouth with her son. The doctor, on his return from the shipping office, bought some tricolor ribbons to put in his buttonhole and set out for Paris. To his friends of the Catholic party he exaggerated the risks he had run at Carville, and less than a week after, an official announcement concerning M. César Sansfin appeared in the *Moniteur;* he was appointed to a pre-

fecture in La Vendée. It was his design simply to mark his adhesion to the new government. The Catholics gave him letters of recommendation; but his doctor's practice was worth seven to eight thousand francs a year at Carville, and he had a horror of appearing in uniform with a sword at his side.

"At Carville," he said to himself, "they are used to my hump and the flaws of my physique."

A week after his appointment the doctor fell ill and went to Carville on leave.

Lamiel had remained at her aunt's. Three days after the duchess had gone, she received four huge packages that almost filled the castle's hooded wagon. They contained linen and every kind of dress, and were a present from the duchess. There was something very tender in this attention. On the twenty-seventh of July, before she left, the duchess went for an hour to the castle and had the packages made up, and, as she greatly distrusted the probity of all the very exemplary persons about her, she had the parcels tied round with string, and under her own eyes had the different places where it crossed sealed with her arms. It was a wise precaution; Mlle. Anselme was very vexed about the packages, and her vexation turned to rage when she found that Lamiel, left alone in the village, did not deign to come up to the castle to visit her.

It hardly occurred to the girl to do so; she was altogether busy hiding the wild joy that possessed her. Each morning, on waking, she felt a new delight in

telling herself that she was no more in that magnificent castle where everybody was old and where, of every twenty words that were spoken, eighteen were uttered in blame. Now, the only annoying task was to write a letter to the duchess once a day; as soon as she gave herself up to her thoughts, her writing was less well formed, but, truly, she had no patience to make a fresh copy. For a moment she thought of the polite rebukes which this negligence would occasion, then swiftly banished all disagreeable ideas, while the fear of reprimand made her join the memory of the duchess, who had been so kind to her, with that of Mlle. Anselme and the rest of her boredom at the castle. In ten days altogether, after leaving it, there remained for all remembrance in Lamiel's mind only a profound abhorrence of three things, which for her symbolized the most execrable tedium—high nobility, great wealth, and edifying discourse touching religion.

Nothing seemed to her at the same time more ridiculous and more odious than affected dignity of carriage and the necessity to speak of all things, even the most amusing, with a kind of measured and cold contempt. After having half regretfully confessed these sentiments to herself, Lamiel noted that the gratitude she undeniably owed the duchess was exactly balanced by her distaste for that great lady's behavior, and she quickly dismissed her from her mind. Even without having to write the letters, she would soon have ceased thinking about her.

The horror of anything reminding her of her stay

at that boring castle was so great that it overcame the vanity so natural to the heart of a girl of sixteen.

On the day of the duchess's departure the doctor seized the opportunity to say to her:

"Go to your room and cry because your protector's leaving, and don't be seen again till tomorrow morning."

Next day, when she came down to kiss Mme. Hautemare, that lady was very surprised to see her clad in peasant's garb, and even with the horrible cotton bonnet which dishonors the pretty faces of the peasant girls in the region of Bayeux.

FOURTEEN

Lamiel's Reading

THIS ACT of pretended modesty won her unanimous applause from the whole village. The ugly cotton bonnet, on the head which had been seen decked with such pretty hats, assuaged envy. Everyone smiled at Lamiel when she went out in the village, wearing wooden shoes and a simple peasant's dress. When her uncle did not see her turning back from the other side of the square, he ran after her.

"Where are you going?" he cried, with alarm on his countenance.

"I'm going to wander about," she answered, laughing. "I was in prison in that castle."

And, indeed, she started off into the country.

"Wait just an hour, till school's over. Then I'll come with you."

"Ah! *What the deuce!*" cried Lamiel—it was one of the vulgar phrases particularly forbidden at the castle—"What the deuce! I can take good enough care of myself against robbers!" And she started to run

off in her wooden shoes, to cut short any objections.

She went more than two leagues, stopped to chat with all the old friends she met, and only at last came back when it was pitch dark. The schoolmaster was already beginning a reprimand in three sections on the impropriety of girls at her age being out at night, when his words were cut short by his worthy spouse, who was eager to pour out her wonder, admiration and envy over the linen and silken robes contained in the packages from the castle.

"Can all that possibly be yours?" she cried, with mournful admiration.

After submitting each object to a detailed commentary which Lamiel found very long, Mme. Hautemare attempted an air of assurance, which the tone of her voice belied, and added:

"I took care of you when you were a child, and it seems to me I've a right to hope that, just on feast days and Sundays, you'll let me wear the very worst of these dresses?"

Lamiel was astounded—such language would have been impossible at the castle; the characters of Mlle. Anselme and the duchess's other women were indeed despicable, but they knew how to express them very differently. At the sight of these dresses Mlle. Anselme would have flung herself into Lamiel's arms and overwhelmed her with kisses and congratulations, then, with a laugh, she would have asked to borrow the one she named. But the girl was in consternation at Mme.

Hautemare's demand; painful reflections crowded upon her—she had nobody to love, and those whom she regarded as perfect, so far as the heart at any rate was concerned, were as vile as the rest!

"So I've nobody to love!"

While she gave herself up to her mournful thoughts, she remained motionless, erect, and with a serious expression. Aunt Hautemare concluded, therefore, that her dear niece was hesitating to lend her one of the dresses in the packages, and in the hope of deciding her, began to recite all the services she had done her before her admission to the castle.

"For, after all, you're not our real niece," she added; "my husband and I chose you from the foundling hospital."

Lamiel's heart was torn.

"Well, I'll give you the four best dresses," she cried angrily.

"Can I pick them?" asked her aunt.

"By all means, *deuce take it!*" answered Lamiel, with an expression of unconcealed despair and impatience.

She was in consternation at the mean language which she had unlearnt at the castle. While admitting to herself her uncle and aunt's poverty of spirit, she had dreamed of a family that she might love. In her need for tender feeling she had made a merit of her aunt's lack of intellect; now she was utterly confused and all of a sudden burst into tears. Her uncle tried to console her for the enormous sacrifice she had

made of the four dresses. In detail he told over all her aunt's rights to her gratitude. Lamiel, who at least wanted to preserve the faculty of loving her uncle, took to flight instinctively and went to walk in the cemetery.

"If I had the doctor here," she meditated, "he'd laugh at my unhappiness and the foolish hopes that caused it; he wouldn't console me, but he'd utter a few truths which would stop me falling into the same mistakes in the future."

All that was pleasant and calm in her uncle's cottage disappeared from her view. They would not even let her occupy the second-floor room in the tower, under the pretext that she would be alone there and that the village gossips would say that, in the night, she could easily open the door to a young man. The thought horrified her. Confined in her little bed she could hear in the living room, from which only a screen separated her, all the discussions which took place in the house. Her feeling of utter disgust was only increased and more affirmed every day. Besides her bitterness at what she perceived, Lamiel was also angry with herself.

"I thought I was clever," she said to herself, "because I sometimes embarrassed the Abbé Clément and even the terrible Doctor Sansfin; but it's simply that I know how to say a few sharp things, while I'm really a very ignorant young girl. I haven't been able to get over my complete surprise for a whole week. I thought it absolutely certain that at my uncle's cottage I

should be free to move about as I liked, and therefore I told myself I should be perfectly happy. Now I have found the liberty whose absence was so cruel at the castle, and yet something that I never knew existed deprives me of all my happiness."

Two days later Lamiel made up her mind from these sad reflections, which were always with her, that she must give up trusting to hope. This truth almost made her desperate. She saw beauty in the whole of life, and suddenly her dreams of pleasure received the most cruel contradiction. Her heart was not tender, but she had distinction of mind. For her spirit, to which love had not yet appeared, interesting conversation was the first necessity; and suddenly, instead of the frequent anecdotes recounted by the duchess at great length and very intelligibly, instead of the charming rays of intellect shining in the remarks of the amiable Abbé Clément, she found herself condemned all day to the most vulgar ideas engendered by Norman prejudice expressed in the most forcible —that is to say, the lowest—style. And she had a new bitterness; she went to see the Abbé Clément in his parish; she saw him reading his breviary in his orchard, and, a moment later, a fat servant came to say that the curé could not receive her; the fat servant adding, with a very sarcastic expression:

"Run off, my girl, and go and pray in the church. You ought to know that one can't come and talk to the curé offhand."

All that was sensitive in Lamiel rebelled; bursting

into tears, she returned to her uncle's. The next day, she had come to a decision—that of no longer caring how she might be received anywhere. Before, she had shuddered at the mere thought of going to see Mlle. Anselme, whom she expected to greet her with sneering malice. Now that she had been so ill-welcomed by the Abbé Clément, whom she had taken for a friend, what did the others matter?——

Although born in Normandy, Lamiel was hardly an adept in the art of preventing her face from betraying the sentiments which agitated her. In fact, she had not had time to acquire experience. In heart and soul she was a romantic who pictured to herself her chances of future happiness; that was the reverse of the medal. Conversation with the duchess and the Abbé Clément and the harsh philosophy of Doctor Sansfin had wonderfully nurtured the seeds of intelligence with which nature had endowed her; but while the long evenings were thus occupied, she had no occasion to become familiar with the impressions and little mortifications to which rude contact with her equals would accustom her. Her only experience of them was the impertinence of a troop of envious maidservants. She was sixteen, and the most insignificant little village girl knew more than she about young men and love. In spite of the poets, these matters are invested with no elegance in rustic life; there, everything is coarse and founded on very distinct experience.

Lamiel's eyes were so eloquent of despair as to

frighten Mlle. Anselme when she reached her room. For the young girl had just passed through the drawing room where the Abbé Clément used to talk with her so graciously, and now he refused to see her.

The old *femme de chambre* had prepared a quantity of polite impertinences which she intended to discharge on Lamiel at the first opportunity. She could not forgive her the duchess's seven silk dresses, on which she had counted for herself.

But her first thought on seeing Lamiel was that she, Mlle. Anselme, was separated by a good nine yards from the first drawing room, where there was perhaps a deaf old *valet de chambre*. She therefore behaved to the young girl with so honeyed a politeness that Lamiel's heart revolted. She said sharply:

"Madame has ordered me to continue my education as her reader, and I've come for some books."

"Take whatever you want, Mademoiselle; isn't it known that everything in the castle is yours?"

Lamiel profited by this permission and carried off twenty volumes; she left the library, then suddenly came back.

"I was forgetting——," she said to Mlle. Anselme, who was watching her movements with suspicion.

She had at first taken the novels of Mme. de Genlis, the Bible, *Erastes* or *The Friend of Youth, Sethos,* Anquetil's histories, and other books which the duchess allowed her to read.

"What a fool I am!" she said to herself. "I worry myself with disgust at the sugary compliments of this

woman who detests me. I'm neglecting the doctor's precept—see the position as a whole, and rise above the feeling of the moment. I have a chance to carry off all the books which Madame so strongly forbade me to read." She took Voltaire's tales, Grimm's correspondence, *Gil Blas,* etc.

Mlle. Anselme said she would make a list of the chosen works; but to avoid this accusatory catalogue, Lamiel had the wit to select books that were unbound and not yet read. Mlle. Anselme, seeing that the books she took were unbound, was content with counting them. As she carried home her load Lamiel was extremely sad; she could not answer a question she put to herself, and was full of self-condemnation:

"What!" she thought. "I am vexed at the kindly vulgarity I find at my uncle's, and vexed also at the too-honeyed politeness of that Mlle. Anselme, who longs to see me at the bottom of a pond, as Doctor Sansfin says; so at sixteen I am the same as Doctor Sansfin says women of fifty are! I'm vexed at everything and angry with the human race."

The copy of *Gil Blas* taken from the castle had illustrations; it was what decided her to open this work in preference to the others. She had succeeded in smuggling all the volumes into the tower unperceived by her uncle, whom the view of so many books would have been certain to enrage; for, although a schoolmaster, he often repeated:

"It is books that have ruined France."

That was one of the maxims of the terrible Du

Saillard, the curé of the parish. As she hid the volumes in the ground-floor of the tower, Lamiel read a few pages of *Gil Blas*. They pleased her so much that she had the daring to leave the cottage by the back window at about eleven o'clock, when she saw that her aunt and uncle were fast asleep. She had the key of the tower, which she entered, and read there until four in the morning. As she went back to bed she was perfectly happy and no longer filled with self-condemnation. For one thing, her mind occupied with the adventures narrated by *Gil Blas,* she no longer dwelt on the sentiments for which she reproached herself. Also, still better, she had drawn from *Gil Blas* sentiments of indulgence towards herself and towards others; she found those inspired in her aunt Hautemare by the view of the lovely dresses less contemptible.

For a week Lamiel gave herself up entirely to reading.

FIFTEEN

Love in the Wood

For the next few months she was bored whenever she was in her uncle's house, so she passed her life in the fields. She resumed her meditations on love; but her thoughts were not tender; they were only curious.

The language used by her aunt in warning her against the seductions of men owed its success to its platitudes; her disgust at it overflowed upon love itself.

One day, her aunt said to her:

"Since it's known that the fine dresses I wear to church on Sundays come from you, the young men will perhaps suppose—and quite reasonably—that the duchess will give you a present on your wedding, and when they see you alone, they'll try *to hug you in their arms.*"

These last words roused Lamiel's curiosity and on her return from her evening walk a young man who was coming back from a wedding at a neighboring village, where a great deal of cider had been consumed, prevailing on a slight acquaintance, stopped

her and made the gesture of *hugging her in his arms.* Lamiel very calmly let herself be embraced by the young man, who already conceived great hopes, when she repulsed him forcibly. As he tried to begin again, she threatened to strike him and took to flight. He was too drunk to follow her.

"What, is that all it is?" she said to herself. "He has a smooth skin; he hasn't a hard mouth like my uncle, who scrapes me when he kisses me." But the next day her curiosity continued to reason round the meagerness of the pleasure to be found in being embraced by a young man. "There must be something more that I haven't felt; otherwise surely priests wouldn't keep on denouncing sins like that."

The schoolmaster Hautemare had a kind of deputy to hear the lessons—Jean Berville, a big simpleton of twenty, and very fair. The children themselves laughed at his little round doll's head perched on top of his large body. Jean Berville trembled before Lamiel. It was on a feast day that she said to him after dinner:

"The others are off to the dance. Go by yourself and wait for me at the crossroads a quarter of a league from the village, near the great cross. I'll join you in a quarter of an hour."

Jean Berville started out and seated himself at the foot of the cross without suspecting anything.

Lamiel arrived.

"Take me *to walk in the wood,*" she said.

The curé above all forbade the young girls *to go and walk in the wood.* When she was in the heart of

it, in a well-hidden place surrounded by tall trees and behind a sort of thicket, she said to Jean:

"Embrace me! Take me in your arms!"

Jean embraced her and became very red. Lamiel did not know what to say to him; she remained there, thinking in silence for a quarter of an hour, then said to Jean:

"Let's go. You keep on to Charnay, a league from here, and don't tell anyone that I brought you into the wood."

Jean, very red, obeyed; but next day, on his return from the school, he kept looking at her. A week later came the first Monday in the month. Lamiel always went to confession on that day. She related her promenade in the wood to the holy priest, not troubling to hide anything from him, devoured as she was with curiosity.

The honest curé made a terrible scene, but added nothing, or almost nothing, to her knowledge. Three days after, Jean Berville was dismissed by Hautemare, who started to spy on his niece. A word of his which she overheard made her suspect that she had a share in Jean's disgrace. She searched for him and found him a week later, driving carts for a neighbor and, running after him, she gave him two gold pieces. Astonished, Jean gazed round; there was nobody on the road. He embraced Lamiel and scraped her with his beard; she pushed him away with violence, but was still determined to find out what to believe about love.

"Come to the wood at six tomorrow, where we were the other Sunday. I'll be there."

Jean started to scratch his ear:

"The trouble is," he said, after much grinning and repetition of "Mademoiselle is too kind," "my work won't be finished. There's a market that ought to bring me in six francs a day, and I shan't be coming back with Mery's cart till eight tomorrow."

"When will you be free?"

"On Thursday—No, there may be something still to do, and I shan't touch my money before everything's finished. Friday's best, so as not to upset my arrangements."

"Very well. I'll give you ten francs. Come to the wood on Friday without fail, at six in the evening."

"Oh, for ten francs, if Mademoiselle wishes, I'll come at six tomorrow."

"All right, tomorrow evening," said Lamiel, impatient at such boorish greed.

Next day she found Jean in the wood; he had put on his Sunday clothes.

"Embrace me!" she said to him.

He did so. Lamiel noticed that, following her orders, he had shaved; she remarked upon it.

"Yes, that's so," he answered alertly. "Mademoiselle's the mistress; she pays well and she's so pretty."

"Certainly. And it's your mistress that I want to be."

"Ah, that's different," said Jean in a business-like manner. Then, without rapture, without love, the young Norman made Lamiel his mistress.

"Isn't there anything else?" she asked.

"No," replied Jean.

"Have you had many mistresses?"

"I've had three."

"And there's nothing else."

"Not that I know of. Will Mademoiselle want to see me again?"

"I'll tell you in a month's time. But no chattering! Don't tell anyone about me."

"Not likely!" he cried, his eyes sparkling for the first time.

"What! Love's nothing more than that?" said Lamiel to herself, in astonishment. "It's certainly not worth the trouble of forbidding it so strongly. But I'm deceiving poor Jean. So as to meet me here again, he'll perhaps refuse a good job." She called him back and gave him another five francs. He thanked her fervently.

Lamiel sat down and watched him go.

Then she burst into laughter, saying over and over:

"What, that wonderful love, that's all it is?"

She wiped away the blood and hardly thought about the pain.

SIXTEEN

Duval's Master

As SHE returned, pensive and skeptical, she perceived a good-looking young man, very well dressed, advancing towards her on her side of the road. This young man, who seemed shortsighted, almost stopped his horse in order more at his ease to inspect Lamiel through his eyeglass. When he was not more than thirty paces way, he made a gesture of gratification and called his servant, to whom he gave his horse and who galloped off.

Young Fédor de Miossens, for he it was, smoothed his locks and advanced towards Lamiel with an air of assurance.

"He's certainly annoyed with me," she said to herself.

Then, when he was quite near:

"He's timid at heart and wants to give himself a bold expression."

This remark, which leapt to the eyes of our heroine, greatly reassured her; seeing his strutting gait and appearance of high fatuity, she said to herself:

"The road's very lovely."

On the morrow of the young duke's arrival, Duval,

his favorite *valet de chambre,* had informed him that owing to his visit they had been obliged suddenly to send away from the castle a pretty young workgirl of sixteen, charming in every point, a pet of his mother's, who knew English, etc.

"All the worse!" the young duke had said.

"How, all the worse?" asked Duval, with the confidence of a man who leads his master by the nose. "It's robbing you of your property, M. le Duc. You owe it to yourself to attack this young woman; she must be given some money and a good room in the village, where you can go and smoke your cigar in her company, of an evening."

"It would be nearly as boring as it is at my mother's," said the duke with a yawn.

Duval, seeing that his description of such felicity made little impression, added:

"If one of your friends, M. le Duc, comes to see you at the castle, you'll have something to show him in the evening."

This remark took effect, and the eloquence of Duval, who took pains to speak of Lamiel, day in, day out, prepared the way for the direction of his young master, who trembled at the idea of doing something ridiculous which might make him the sport of an anecdote. But finally the boredom at the castle grew excessive; the Abbé Clément had too much sense to air his opinions before a young idiot freshly arrived from Paris and who knew that he was nephew to a *femme de chambre.*

Fédor ended by surrendering against his will to the exhortations of his tyrant, Duval. For three or four years he had been really busily occupied with geometry and chemistry, and had preserved all the notions of a boy of sixteen on the air of facility and ease with which a man of birth should approach a young work-girl, even though she knew English. These notions were a real obstacle, and he dared not avow them to Duval. The fellow's utter impudence deeply shocked him; he was frightened of ridicule. The young duke had nobility of spirit; he was far from suspecting that the five or six louis to be made out of furnishing the little apartment for Lamiel were the only motives that set his valet in action. The more Fédor was timid, the more Duval's flattery was agreeable to him. Duval could only make him move by pushing it to excess.

For instance, he flattered him horribly the day when he determined him to speak to Lamiel. Fédor quickly leapt from his horse the moment she came in view and approached her with lavish display of gesture.

"Here, Mademoiselle, is a wooden needlecase, charmingly set with points of steel. You forgot it when you left my mother's house. She's very fond of you, and ordered me to give it you if I saw you. And, do you know, I've been a month looking for you."

Lamiel's eyes were splendid with intelligence and perception while, enclosed in complete immobility, she observed from the height of her character this

elegant young man exhausting himself in little, abrupt gestures like a hero of vaudeville.

"He's not really saying anything gracious," she thought. "He's hardly any better than that stupid Jean Berville whom I've just left. What a difference from the Abbé Clément. How gracious he would have been if he'd brought my needlecase back!"

At the end of a quarter of an hour, which seemed very long to the young girl, the duke hit on a well-turned and natural compliment. Lamiel smiled, and Fédor immediately became charming; to him as to her, the time seemed less horribly drawn out. Encouraged by this little success, which enraptured him, he was delightful, for he had very great intelligence; nature had simply failed to endow him with a will of his own. The poor young fellow had been so much and so often overwhelmed with warnings on the awkwardness one shows at the age of sixteen, when one has to comport oneself in a drawing room like a man of the world, that at the least movement to be made, the least word to be uttered, he was stupefied by the recollection of three or four contradictory rules that had at all cost to be followed. It is the same embarrassment which makes our artists so insipid. The agreeable words that he chanced upon in his desire to seduce Lamiel gave him confidence; he forgot the rules and was altogether pleasant. He could not have been more so.

"Most certainly," thought Lamiel, "I should have finished with Jean and learnt from this person in

front of me what love is; but very likely he doesn't know himself."

Soon, however, as a result of feeling at ease, the duke reached the point of too much assurance.

"Good-bye, sir," Lamiel said to him immediately. "I forbid you to follow me."

Fédor remained motionless on the road, as if changed to a statue. Her behavior, so entirely unforeseen, set Lamiel's memory forever in his heart.

Happily, on reaching the castle, he had the courage to confess to Duval.

"You mustn't speak to the affected creature for a week. At least," added Duval, seeing that his advice was displeasing, "that is what an ordinary young man would do; but a man of your birth, M. le Duc, consults his pleasures above all. The heir to one of the noblest of French titles and greatest of fortunes is not bound by normal rules."

The young duke kept by his side until one o'clock in the morning this man of such elegant diction.

It rained the next day, which put Fédor in despair. He spent his time thinking of Lamiel; it was useless to scour the roads in hope of meeting her. He took the carriage and passed twice before the Hautemare's door. Next day he awaited the time to go for a walk with all a lover's impatience and, indeed, this love created for him by Duval had already delivered him from some of his boredom. Duval had provided him with five or six methods of approach to the young girl. Fédor forgot them all, when, half a league before

him on the same road where they first met, he caught sight of her. Taking to a gallop, he sent back his horse when he was a hundred paces away and accosted her, trembling and so excited that he spoke as he thought.

"You dismissed me the day before yesterday, Mademoiselle, and it plunged me in despair. What can I do, not to be dismissed today?"

"You can stop speaking to me as though I were one of the duchess's maids. I was almost one, but I'm not any longer."

"You've been her reader, but never one of her maids, and my mother counted you as a friend, Mademoiselle. I should like to be your friend as well, but on one condition—that you will play the duchess's part. You will truly be the mistress, in the full meaning of the word."

Lamiel was pleased with this beginning; her pride was gratified by his timidity, but the flaw in the sensation was that too much scorn went with it.

"Good-bye, sir," she soon said. "I can't see you tomorrow." And as the duke hesitated to go:

"If you don't leave me at once, I won't see you for a week," she added imperiously.

He took flight, which greatly amused her. A thousand times she had heard at the castle of the respect with which all the world treated an only son, the heir to so great a name. She found it pleasant to assume the contrary attitude.

SEVENTEEN

The Passport

THE ACQUAINTANCE continued, but on that note. Lamiel was not only an absolute, but a capricious mistress. However, after a fortnight she increased their meetings, since she began to be bored in the afternoon, when she had no good-looking young man to tease. As for him, he was mad with love. She passed her time in inventing ways to torment him.

"Wear black tomorrow, when you come to see me."

"I'll obey; but why so sad a color?"

"One of my cousins has died; he was a cheesemonger."

She was amused at the effect produced by this detail on the handsome young man.

"If ever this gets known," he thought, gazing sadly at the castle, "I shall be ruined by ridicule."

He asked his mother to let him return to Paris. He would probably not have the courage to remain there, but he was refused.

"At any rate," he said to himself next day, on his way to a meeting fixed on that occasion at a clogmaker's hut in a nearby wood, "the progress of radi-

calism can't still be denied; here I am in mourning for a cheesemonger!"

Lamiel, seeing him obediently in black, said:

"Kiss me!"

The poor young fellow wept with joy. But Lamiel only felt the pleasure of commanding. She let him kiss her because that day her aunt had made her a more violent scene than usual on her frequent meetings with the young duke, which were the talk of the village. It was in vain that she kept changing their meeting places. For three days her curiosity had found gratification in making Fédor recite the least details of his life in Paris; that was why she remained deaf to the voice of prudence which counselled her to dismiss him with a word the moment he appeared.

The light was rapidly failing. Lamiel and her companion left the wood to return to the village. Speaking with a natural charm and a good deal of wit, the duke was telling how he spent his days in Paris, when from a distance Lamiel saw her uncle Hautemare getting out of a trap, which it must have been expensive to hire, in order to spy on her. She was angered at the sight.

"Have you always got that faithful valet called Duval?"

"Certainly," replied Fédor, laughing.

"Well, send him to Paris to fetch something you've left there."

"But it would be most inconvenient. What shall I do without him?"

"You're crying out like a child afraid of its nurse. Don't see me again until Duval's out of Carville. Here's my uncle running after me, and I wish I could get rid of him as easily as I can of you. Good-bye!"

Lamiel had a very long and disagreeable scene with her uncle. It began again when she got home. Mme. Hautemare carried on the debate and sustained it lengthily. Boredom paralyzed all Lamiel's feelings. She would unhesitatingly have thrown herself into the Seine to save her uncle and her good aunt, had they fallen into its waters; but when they orated to the girl, who found their company so dull, of their white hairs dishonored by her conduct, she perceived only the tedium of their converse. The worthy old Hautemare, summoning terms of the greatest pathos, demanded her word of honor that next day she would not leave the house after dinner. Lamiel did not see how she could seriously refuse it, and with her honor was a religion; once her word was given, she could not fail to keep it. Her absence from all their usual meeting places made the duke desperate. After a whole night of indecision he sacrificed to his mistress a man who was his master. It was essential to the young duke that Duval should not realize his fall from favor; so he smothered him with caresses and charged him from Paris to render account of the life that his intimate friend, the Vicomte D——, was leading. For the duke went so far as to confide to Duval that it was a matter of obtaining the hand of Mlle. Ballard, the daughter of a wealthy furrier, and that

a letter from a common friend had informed him that the viscount was supposed to be in quest of the same fortune.

It seemed during this week that the cataracts of heaven were concentrated on Normandy; it poured for three days, and the boredom of the weather which reigned in alliance with the reprimands in the Hautemare household, altogether extinguished in our heroine's far from susceptible heart the small amount of pity she felt at the coming solitude of the two old people.

On the fourth day it was still raining, but rather less; and Lamiel, in thick clogs and with a cotton bonnet on her head, and covered with a square of oilcloth with a hole in the middle through which she put her head, set out with firm purpose for the clogmaker's hut in the midst of the thicket. At the end of an hour she saw the duke arrive, as drenched as could be; she noticed that he had taken care for his horse, but not for himself. It had been galloping at full speed all about the region for three or four leagues.

"I've just been to all our other meeting places," said the duke, whose manner was neither very loving nor passionate. "*Curlew's* done up; you've no idea how muddy this country is."

"Yes, I have; a peasant like me knows all about that. I love Curlew, because he makes you ridiculous; just now you cherish him a hundred times more than the girl you pompously call your mistress. It doesn't matter to me, but on your part it's ridiculous."

These words, apparently so theatrical, were perfectly genuine. Lamiel had once been on the point of falling in love with the Abbé Clément. As for the duke, she studied him through curiosity and for the purpose of her own instruction.

"There," she thought, "is what Mme. Hautemare calls a man of good society. I believe that, if I had to choose, I should prefer that stupid Jean Berville who loved me for five francs. Let's see what sort of a face he'll make at what I'm going to say. He hasn't got his Duval any more, whose cleverness and impudence reduced his troubles to a matter of money. How on earth will this good-looking boy respond to what I propose? Perhaps he won't respond at all; he'll be frightened, and hug me in his arms like a bundle of rags. Let's see."

"My handsome little Fédor, that poor Curlew—a thoroughbred who's run at Chantilly, where the peasants were clever enough to charge you two louis for a fowl—that poor Curlew looks very wet, and you haven't a cover. He might get a chill. If I were you, I'd take off my coat and throw it over his back. Instead of talking to me, you ought to walk him in the wood."

Fédor was unable to answer, so anxious was he for his horse and so right was Lamiel.

"That's not all," she continued, "something much worse is in store. Your good luck's going to throw you over."

"What?" asked Fédor, in a panic.

"I'm going to elope with you, and we're going to

live in the same lodgings at Rouen—the same lodgings, do you hear?"

The duke remained motionless, frozen with astonishment. Lamiel shivered, then went on:

"Since love for a peasant might dishonor you, I want to touch this pretended love of yours with my hands, or, to put it plainly, I want to make you confess that your heart isn't steadfast enough to feel *real love*."

He was so charming, that for the second time since they knew each other, Lamiel said to him:

"Kiss me, and do it with passion—But you're making my bonnet fall off." (It should be known that nothing is more hideous and ridiculous than the cotton bonnet worn by the young women of Caen and Bayeux.)

"So I am," said the duke, laughing.

He took off her bonnet, put his shooting cap on her head, and kissed her with a rapture that had for Lamiel all the charm of the unexpected. The sarcastic look disappeared from her lovely eyes.

"If you were always like this, I should love you. If you agree to the bargain I'm proposing, you'll get me a passport, for I'm afraid of the gendarmes. [This sentiment is more or less innate in the regions where the Chouans were, about 1795.] You'll take some money, you'll ask the duchess's permission, you'll rent one of the prettiest apartments in Rouen, and we'll live together for—who knows?—a week at least, until you begin to bore me."

The young duke was in a transport of delight; he wanted to kiss her again.

"No," she said, "you'll kiss me only when I order

you to. My parents bore me with their endless sermons, and it's to laugh at them that I'm giving myself to you. I don't love you; you haven't a true and natural look; you always seem to be playing in a comedy. Do you know Abbé Clément, that poor young man who has only one threadbare black coat?"

"And what do you want with poor Clément?" asked the duke, laughing disdainfully.

"He looks as if he thought what he says at the moment of saying it. If he were rich and had a Curlew, I should go to him."

"But you're making me a declaration of hate, not of love."

"Well, we won't go to Rouen. Don't do anything I order. I never lie and never exaggerate."

"My love is so hot that in the end it'll warm that beautiful statue," said Fédor with a smile. "The chief difficulty is the passport. Ah, why haven't I got Duval?"

"I wanted to see what you would be without him."

"What! You're as Machiavellian as that?"

Gradually, Fédor realized his luck. He even eagerly insisted that Lamiel should pretend for a moment that she was already at Rouen; but he only managed to get himself dismissed half an hour before sunset. Then she called him back; the wood was so soaking that she wished to ride behind him as far as the high road. To feel her thus near was too much for Fédor's reason; he was drunk with love and trembled to the point of hardly being able to grasp the reins.

"All right, turn round," said Lamiel, "and kiss me as much as you like."

Intoxicated with happiness, Fédor had a flash of good sense; he went at once in search of a gamekeeper in his woods, an old soldier who lived more than two leagues away; he gave him a few gold pieces and asked him to get a woman's passport.

Lamiel reflected deeply; the forester had a strong character, plenty of will, and little initiative. The duke was compelled, for the first time in his life, to think and to invent. He soon found a method.

"You've got a niece; ask for a passport for her. She's had some money left to her at Forges, beyond Rouen; but she has to see a lawyer at Rouen, and then a relation who's also a legatee and lives in Dieppe. She may have to go to Paris. (So, my dear Lamiel, we get a passport for Rouen, Dieppe and Paris.) You'll give me the passport; three days afterwards, you'll make a declaration to the mayor that your niece has lost it, that she hates the thought of the journey, because it's bad luck to lose a passport, and she's going to stay where she is. I'll have a letter written to you from Rouen, which will mention the legacy and say there's no need for her journey."

"I'll do exactly as you say," answered Lairel, "but, hang it all! my poor niece's name is going to be taken by some young woman whom your Grace is getting down from Paris."

"Perhaps you're right; but change the spelling of your niece's name. What's she called?"

"Jeanne Verta Laviele, aged nineteen."

The duke tore a page from the gamekeeper's register and wrote: Leviail Jeanne-Gerta.

"Try to get a passport in that name."

"It's only nine o'clock, the mayor's at the tavern; I'll go and do the trick. If he doesn't consult the curé, the fool will do as he's told."

The same night, at three-quarters past eleven, the gamekeeper came to the castle, despite the horrible weather, and gave the duke a passport under a name thus inscribed—*Geanne Betait Leviail*—"I wrote it myself," said the keeper; "I could have put anything I liked."

The duke gave him as many gold Napoleons as Lairel had hoped for francs.

At eight o'clock he passed before Hautemare's door and stationed himself near the porch with the passport in his hand. Lamiel saw him quite well.

"He isn't such a ninny after all," she said to herself, "unless perhaps Duval's returned to the castle." Then, quite unexpectedly, she felt sorry for the two poor old people whom she was about to desert. She wrote them a very long letter, most cleverly conceived. She started by making a gift to her aunt of all her fine dresses, then promised to return within two months and without having *neglected her duty*. Finally, she advised her excellent parents to say that she had gone, with their consent, to look after an old aunt who was very ill, near Orléans, in the district they came from.

EIGHTEEN

Holly-Green

THE MEADOWS were drowned in water next day, but it was splendid weather. At three o'clock Lamiel was standing on a bridge thirty yards from the highroad. Fédor had no idea of taking the great step of elopement on that day.

"I've been so sad and so touched at leaving the house and those poor, dull old people," she said to him, "that I don't want to go back there."

The young duke was no longer the same man that he was on the previous evening; he was astonished and embarrassed by what she said. But Lamiel having explained that, furnished with her passport, she meant to hire a horse and go to B——, where she would expect him in one or two days' time, he recovered his spirits and Lamiel perceived his delight. She asked him if his waistcoats had arrived from Paris. The evening before, he had lengthily entertained her with the account of an assortment of shooting waistcoats that his tailor was going to send him; there was one especially, with grey stripes on a grey ground, which made a charming effect, along with a shooting jacket of that year's fashion.

When he told her of the grey-on-grey waistcoat, Lamiel said to herself:

"As a matter of fact, he likes me to tell him all the details of my life at home, and to me he talks about what interests him."

This sage reflection checked her contempt.

"Well, I'm going to leave for B—— quite alone. Come there tomorrow unless the matter of having a waistcoat in the fashion keeps you at the castle."

"How cruel you are! You abuse the astonishing wit that heaven has given you! Aren't you my first love?"

He spoke with grace and without lacking in ideas —pretty little ideas that were very elegant, very gentle. Lamiel rendered him justice on that account, but the thought of the grey-on-grey waistcoat spoilt everything.

"It's better, for the sake of your caution, that I go alone. In case my poor parents were so silly as to ask advice from the lawyer Bouel, our neighbor. They might accuse you of abducting me. As a matter of fact, I can swear you've hardly at all done so. As a precaution, drive past their door in the carriage and show yourself in the village."

Lamiel and her companion went for a walk in the forest. It was full of pools of water three or four inches thick, which forced them to make many turns as they strolled. Lamiel was sad and pensive, thinking of her foster parents. She interrupted a very long silence to say to the duke, with an air of great seriousness:

"Would you have the courage to take me on horseback behind you as far as the outskirts of Bayeux, on the other side of the forest? There I could take the coach from Vire when it passes, and in the unlikely event of my being pursued, nobody would think I'd crossed the forest as it is now."

Fédor bowed his head, not listening to the end. The cruel words, *"Would you have the courage?"* awoke the French nobleman in him.

"You're terribly unkind," he said. "I must be quite mad to love you."

"Don't love me, then. It's said that love inspires devotion, and unless I'm very mistaken, your heart's only destined to occupy itself seriously with the waistcoats your tailor's sending you from Paris."

At that moment Fédor did all he could not to love her, but he felt that not to see her again needed an effort beyond his power; he only lived during the time he passed with her. He made some charming remarks with suitable ardor, and above all with a grace of which Lamiel began to be very sensible.

When peace was made he helped her on horseback, not without certain details charming to a lover. It was impossible to find a girl prettier, fresher, and especially more provocative, than Lamiel at that instant; she only lacked being a little more well-fleshed.

"It's one of the disadvantages of youth," reflected the duke.

As he pushed the art of mounting on horseback as far as vaulting, he leapt up after her, and several

times in the depths of the wood he obtained permission to give her a kiss.

Lamiel arrived early at ——; but next day she waited and Fédor did not appear.

"I'm indeed a dupe to wait for him; perhaps he hasn't been able to send his luggage to Rouen. But what do I want with that pretty doll? Haven't I three gold Napoleons? It's more than I need to reach Rouen." Lamiel boldly took the diligence that evening; she found it occupied by three commercial travellers, and the manners of those gentlemen revolted her. How different from the duke's! Soon she was in a panic; a moment later she had to snatch up her scissors.

"Gentlemen," she said to them, "one day I shall perhaps take a lover, but it won't be one of you, you're too ugly. Those hands with which you're trying to clasp mine are the hands of a blacksmith, and if you don't take them away at once, I'll flay them with my scissors"—and so she did, to the travellers' great astonishment.

It must be stated in their justification—firstly, that she was too pretty to travel alone, and secondly, everything was straightforward about her except her look. Her look had so much intelligence that, in the eyes of coarse persons not very perceptive of finer shades, it might seem provocative. Lamiel reached B—— at five in the evening. On entering the dining room at the inn, she found twelve commercial travellers at table.

She became the object of general attention, and soon of everyone's compliments. She had noticed that in the diligence her sharp remarks, which went as far as insults, produced more effect than the point of her scissors. One of the travellers at the table began to harry her with his compliments in a really unseemly way; he pretended to know her and began to relate his triumphs.

"It seems, sir," she said to him, "that you usually conquer at first sight?"

"Certainly," he answered. "The Norman beauties don't leave me to languish."

"Well, no doubt you're as pleasant today as on other days; you've been making up to me for an hour; I'm a Norman and proud of it; yet why is it that you seem to me ridiculous and tiresome?"

There followed a universal burst of laughter. The Lovelace threw his chair back in a fury and left the dining room.

Lamiel had picked out a young man, very ugly and with a timid air; she spoke to him graciously. He could hardly answer and became quite red. In a few minutes she made him her protector. In a low voice he advised her to ask the proprietress of the hotel for tea and beg her to keep her company.

"It'll cost you twenty-five sous," he told her, "and at that price you'll be safe for the night."

Lamiel followed this advice and asked the timid young man, who turned out to be an apothecary, to take tea with her.

"Don't you think," he asked the hostess, after praising her tea, "that Mademoiselle's too pretty to travel alone? Here eyes are too intelligent, she ought to assume an expression of stupidity; but as such a *metamorphosis* is impossible in her case, I'm going to give her a recipe."

The word *metamorphosis,* pronounced emphatically, had achieved the conquest of their hostess. With increasing emphasis the apothecary continued:

"Chemists have a way of crushing the leaves of the holly. You are acquainted, ladies, with those leaves, which are prickly at the edge and of such beautiful green color? Would you think it repugnant," he said, addressing himself more particularly to Lamiel, "to apply one of those crushed leaves to one of your cheeks?"

The proposal evoked a peal of laughter.

"And why this operation?" asked Lamiel.

"So long as you don't wash the cheek, you'll be ugly, and unless you hide it with your handkerchief, I swear to you that none of those blustering commercial travellers will annoy you with his gallant suggestions."

They laughed at the idea until after eleven o'clock.

"The chemist will soon be closed," said their hostess.

They sent for a little holly-green; the apothecary rubbed his fingers on it, went up to the mirror, smeared one of his cheeks, then turned towards the two ladies: he looked horrible.

"Well, Mademoiselle," he said, "your taste for flirting will be at grips with your love of peace. Tomorrow morning, before mounting the diligence, it's in your power to be nearly as ugly as I am."

Lamiel laughed heartily at this receipt, but before going to sleep, she thought of Fédor for an hour.

"What a difference!" she reflected. "That apothecary is a man of reason and has something to say, but his oafishness is at once apparent. What an emphatic tone he adopted when he saw the success of his receipt! Those knowledgeable people only make me want to keep quiet. When I'm with my little duke I'm always eager to talk, but I tell him too many disagreeable things."

The duke did not arrive next day, and his absence, which made it seem as if he had a character of his own, raised him in Lamiel's esteem.

"I tormented him too much about his waistcoat; he's taking his revenge, and all the better; I didn't think him capable of it."

The commercial travellers still held a majority at the inn. Lamiel gave a swift glance over the dining room, then went upstairs to put a slight layer of green on her cheek. It had excellent effect; ten times during dinner the hostess came to look at her and burst into laughter when she saw the morose air with which she was regarded by the travellers. Her husband, who presided at the table d'hôte, wanted to know the cause of so much gaiety and was soon sharing it.

He overwhelmed the poor girl, whose cheek was blotched by skin disease, with his attentions, and nearly died of laughing whenever she spoke to him.

In the middle of dinner, the duke arrived, and his expression was charming when he recognized Lamiel. The poor young man was unable to eat, so great was his consternation at the apparent eczema which had given the horrible color to one of his sweetheart's cheeks.

Lamiel was consumed with the desire to speak to him.

"Can it be, perchance, that I love him? And is that the moral side of love?"

She was not used to resisting her caprice; she rose from table before the dessert, as did the duke shortly afterwards. But how was he to find her room? How should he ask for it?

He addressed, with the familiar *Thou,* a waiter who answered impudently:

"When did we keep pigs together, that you should call me *Thou?*"

The duke had never travelled without Duval. He gave two francs to another waiter, who conducted him to Lamiel's room where, for the first time in her life, she was awaiting him with impatience.

"Come in, my handsome friend! Do you love me in spite of this misfortune?" she asked, presenting her discolored cheek for a kiss.

The duke behaved like a hero; he kissed her, but without very well knowing what to say.

"I give you back your liberty," said Lamiel. "Go back home; you don't like girls with eczema on their cheeks."

"Yes I do, hang it all!" replied the duke with heroic resolution. "You've compromised yourself for me and I'll never abandon you!"

"Really!" said she. "Well then, kiss me again!—I ought to let you know it's an eczema that comes back every two or three months, above all, in the spring. Would you care to kiss that cheek?"

It was the first time that the duke felt her respond to his embrace.

"I have won your love," he exclaimed, clasping her with delight. "But this affliction," he added with astonishment, "doesn't alter the freshness and smoothness of your skin."

Lamiel had damped her handkerchief; she pressed it on the cheek affected, and threw herself into the duke's arms. Had he not been so happy and so timid, he would have obtained what he so ardently desired; but when he started to dare, he was a minute too late.

"At Rouen," said Lamiel, "and not before."

She began to joke about his delay, which would have delivered her as a victim to the commercial travellers, without the young apothecary's advice.

The young duke described the extremely awkward situation into which he had fallen; he had been so clumsy as to lie with *details*. He had spoken to his mother of a party at Le Havre to have a look at the sea, arranged with some friends in Paris, *whom he had*

named—the Marquis of So-and-so and the Vicomte Such-and-such. The duchess knew them all, and immediately wanted to join them. It was only the next day that Fédor conceived the idea of saying that the vicomte would be in bad company—a young woman who showed a great deal of talent at the Varieties. The duchess had silenced him at once:

"Go by yourself, or better still, don't go——"

And he had spent half a day in getting permission. He ended by saying:

"When I haven't got Duval, I don't know what to do."

"But I tell you, I don't want any more Duval. I don't like a king in name only. I wish to see you act for yourself."

"In that case I decide," said the duke, kissing her hand, "that we get to Rouen as quickly as possible."

Horses were ordered, and the two lovers reached Rouen next day, at five in the morning.

NINETEEN

Lamiel and Mlle. Volnys

A FORTNIGHT passed; the duke was perfectly happy. Each day his happiness was redoubled, but Lamiel began to be bored. The duke, who at the Hôtel d'Angleterre caused himself to be called simply M. Miossens, overwhelmed her with presents; but Lamiel, after a week, bought some clothes suitable for the daughter of a country bourgeois, and had the very expensive dresses and hats, which announced a lady from Paris, put into packing cases.

"I don't like being stared at in the street. I always remember the commercial travellers. I'm sure I can't walk like a Paris lady."

Her fault, as a woman loved, was to occupy herself too little with her lover and to speak to him too rarely. She made him her teacher of literature; she got him to read and explain to her the comedy acted in the evening at the theatre.

She saw Mlle. Volnys, who gave one performance at Rouen and then went on to Le Havre.

"There's the woman who'll put me on the right way to wearing your fine hats without looking as

though I'd stolen them. Let's go to Le Havre, where there's plenty of time to study her."

"But my mother's threatened to go there herself, and good heavens! what if she saw us?"

"Come, be quick! Let's start at once!" and they set off.

In astuteness Lamiel was making giant strides. On reaching Le Havre, she had the wits to find something wrong with all the apartments that the hotel managers came to suggest to them at the door of their brougham, until she heard:

"Mlle. Volnys, the leading lady at the Gymnase, has just arrived here."

For a week Lamiel, in the first box at the theatre, missed none of Mlle. Volnys's movements; she passed hours at her door half open on the staircase of the Hôtel de l'Amirante to see how Mlle. Volnys descended the stairs.

The Duchesse de Miossens came to Le Havre and Fédor trembled like a leaf. One day, as he walked arm in arm with Lamiel, who, it is true, was wearing a large hat, he saw his mother advancing towards him in the Rue de Paris (the fashionable street of Le Havre). Lamiel believed he would fall down with fright; she insisted that he should boldly go past his mother's side; but in the evening, after the theatre, she granted that they should move on to Rouen. Poor Fédor, unknown to Lamiel, had been to see his mother and ask her pardon for not having dared to salute her, on account of the person to whom he was

giving his arm. He was received by his mother with horrible severity. The duchess ended by driving him from her presence, rebuking him for his insolence in entering it without asking permission.

Lamiel was so changed that the duchess, who saw her quite plainly, did not recognize her in spite of her splendid figure, not easy to forget.

Graces were now hers, and she had lost the aspect of a young doe about to leap away.

She had twice written letters to her foster parents, which the young duke had posted at Orléans, which would help to confirm the fable of a legacy that she advised them to spread in the village the day after she left.

Lamiel spent a month at Rouen; in reality she was bored; the duke had reached the point of having a genuine passion for her, which only made him the more tedious. In her own heart she discovered nothing but a numbing boredom.

Although she made poor Fédor, who tired his chest with it, read to her more than four hours each day, she had not yet reached the point of divining the reasons for her boredom. Two or three times, in her bewilderment, she surprised herself on the verge of consulting the duke on the causes of this mortal affliction; she stopped just in time.

In this odd condition, Lamiel had recourse to all kinds of inventions to prevent herself being bored. One day, she made the duke instruct her in geometry. This impulse redoubled his love. In all that was inde-

pendent of the imprescriptive rights of the nobility and the support it might gain from the priests, the study of geometry had taught the young pupil of the École Polytechnique not to be taken in by words. Without clearly seeing how much he owed to geometry, Fédor loved it passionately; he was delighted at the ease with which Lamiel grasped its elements.

Thanks to her studies and her continual reflections, Lamiel was very different from the young girl who had left the village six weeks before. She began to find words for the thoughts which agitated her.

"A girl who runs away from home behaves badly; that's so true that she must always hide what she's done. And why does she behave badly? To amuse herself; while as for me, I'm dying of boredom. I'm obliged to reason with myself to make life bearable. I have the theatre in the evening and the use of a carriage when it rains, but when I take a walk, it always has to be along this avenue of big trees which I know by heart; the duke calls it ignoble to walk across fields.

" 'What would we look like?' he asks.

" 'We should look like people who were getting amusement out of life.' And he even tells me, with an air of wanting to annoy me, that there's something common and in bad taste in saying so.

"He bored me badly enough only a week after Jean Berville taught me, for money, to know what love is—but two months together, good God! And in this smoky Rouen, too, where I don't know anybody!"

Suddenly Lamiel saw light. "When I found him again, after being exposed to the politeness of those brute beasts of commercial travellers aping the Lovelace, I thought him agreeable. I must send him away for three days."

"My dear," she said to him, "go and spend three or four days with the duchess. I owe her a great debt of gratitude, and if ever she learns that she's obliged to me for your disorderly life at Rouen, she might think me ungrateful and I should be in despair."

This idea of *ingratitude* shocked Fédor and seemed to him in bad taste—"She assumes a kind of equality" —and without ever having reflected with the reason that geometry had instilled in him, he considered that the niece of a village choirmaster owed every sort of respect to a lady of his mother's rank, even though the latter had shown her no favors, and that it was ridiculous to pick out the word *gratitude*. Also, he had no desire to go and expose himself to his mother's eternal sermons; but Lamiel repeating her command, he had to set off.

She was madly gay at being alone and freed from the constant amiable and flattering speeches of the young duke. She began by buying a pair of clogs, and walked arm in arm with the manageress of the hotel.

"Let's have a run through the fields, my dear Marthe," she said to her, "let's get away from this eternal Rouen boulevard, which heaven confound!"

Marthe, seeing her wandering across the fields, fol-

lowing the little paths and sometimes not following any, and stopping to enjoy her happiness, asked:

"Isn't he coming?"

"Who?"

"Apparently that lover you're looking for."

"God save me from lovers! I like my liberty better than anything. But haven't you ever had lovers?"

"Of course," said Marthe, in a low voice.

"And what do you think about them?"

"Love's something delicious."

"Well, I can't think of anything more dull. Everybody praises love as the greatest of all happiness; in all the comedies, you only see people who talk about their love; they kill themselves for love in the tragedies; as for me, I want my lover to be my slave and in a very short time I'd send him away."

Marthe stood petrified with astonishment.

"You, Mademoiselle, who have so good-looking a young man! Somebody said the other day to Madame that he knew you well, and that M. Miossens had taken you away from another lover who gave you a thousand francs a month."

"I'll bet," said Lamiel, "that the somebody was a commercial traveller."

"Well, yes, he was," said Marthe, opening her eyes wide.

Lamiel burst out laughing.

"And didn't this traveller give you to understand that he had enjoyed the honor of my good graces?"

"Alas! yes," said Marthe, with downcast eyes.

Lamiel sank against a nearby tree and laughed until she was out of breath.

On re-entering Rouen, she was recognized by the young men who saw her every evening at the play; and Marthe received two little notes quickly written in pencil, that were put in her hand together with a piece of money. She wanted to give them to Lamiel.

"No," said the latter, "keep them and give them to M. Miossens when he comes back, and he'll pay you as well."

When it was time for the theatre to open, Lamiel regretted the duke; then she cried:

"No, I declare! I'd rather miss the play than see him arrive with my indispensable bouquet."

Then she ran to the proprietress of the hotel:

"Would you care for me to hire a box for the play, Madame, and would you come with me?"

Her hostess at first declined, then accepted and sent for a hairdresser.

"Well, I've indeed the spirit of contradiction," thought Lamiel; she had still her fragment of holly-green, and colored her left cheek with it.

But the box was on the left side of the theatre; she was a target for all the gazes of the elegant audience, and three notes, of formidable length, written in ink this time, were brought to the hotel before midnight. She glanced through them with a haste that soon turned to disgust.

"It isn't the coarseness of the commercial travellers, but it's pretty dull."

Lamiel was perfectly happy and had almost entirely forgotten the duke, when after two days he reappeared.

"Already!" she said to herself.

She found him quite insane with love, and, what is more, devoting his time to proving to her, with the soundest reasoning, that he was so.

"That means," reflected the young Norman peasant, "that you're going to be more boring than usual."

This experiment of two days' liberty had rendered Lamiel utterly rebellious to boredom.

Next morning, after they had risen and he was starting to kiss her hands again:

"Here's a creature who worries over everything that happens to him; since he's had to fend for himself, he's a man in two volumes; a Duval is necessary to him."

She sent him on some errands and to pay the hotel bill. Then she gave orders for some workmen to come and make cases in which were placed all the handsome presents given her by the duke. She packed his trunks and her own; and after that, seeing him from the window, at about four o'clock returning to the hotel, she went down to meet him and engaged him to take her to dinner at B——, a village on the Seine.

On their way back from B——, they went straight to the theatre; when it struck eight, she said to the duke:

"Keep the box and wait for me. I'll take the carriage and only be a moment. You can see by your watch."

She sped to the hotel and had the duke's trunks addressed to Cherbourg; the diligence which took them went at half-past eight. She had her own luggage taken to the Paris diligence. Fédor had three thousand, one hundred francs; she put one thousand, five hundred and fifty in one of the trunks addressed to Cherbourg, and one thousand, five hundred and fifty in one of hers. While playing with him, she had stolen his purse.

TWENTY

Paris

It would be hard to paint the transports of delight she felt at the moment her diligence started for Paris. Snug in a corner, her cheek well smeared with green, she laughed and jumped for joy as she pictured to herself the duke's confusion on returning to the hotel and finding neither mistress, money nor luggage. For the first few hours Lamiel was a little afraid to see Fédor come galloping up on a post horse. She found a remedy for this mischance, which was, to pretend not to know him. For the rest, she had taken pains at the hotel to make them think she had gone by the diligence to Bayeux, and, indeed, that was the road on which Fédor pursued her.

The night of travelling, in flight from a lover so pleasant and courteous, was, on the whole, the happiest experience of Lamiel's life up to the present. She was rather afraid of the thieves in Paris. On descending from the diligence, she had the unfortunate idea of trying to seem as though she knew the city, and asked to be driven to a large hotel whose name she pretended to have forgotten. This resulted in her

being given an apartment at the Hôtel de X——, in the Rue de Rivoli, at five hundred francs a month.

A little bewildered by the number of servants and the luxury of the house, she asked to see the manageress, and, begging her to keep it a secret, enquired of her where she could find a good doctor. It was one of the duke's anecdotes which gave her the idea of this stratagem.

The next day, a new visit to the manageress:

"I've never been in Paris before, Madame," she said, "and what I fear above all, as I've no maid with me, is to be followed in the street. I should like to be dressed as a little bourgeoise; would you be so kind as to come with me to buy a complete costume of that sort?"

The manageress admired this young woman, clad in the most expensive garments, who wanted to change herself into a little bourgeoise. One circumstance redoubled Mme. le Grand's astonishment: as Lamiel felt hot on entering the manageress's room, she took her handkerchief and wiped off nearly all the color that stained her cheek. Mme. le Grand's curiosity made her very attentive; she began by closely examining the young girl's passport, and treated her so kindly as to win next day from Lamiel the confession that, annoyed by the assiduity of her fellow-travellers, particularly those of the commercial species, she had taken the advice of another, an apothecary by trade, and had painted her cheek with holly-green.

Two days later, all the hotel was admiring this tall

young girl, a little abrupt, it must be admitted, in her movements, but so well formed and using so singular a cosmetic. Mme. le Grand did her the service of getting posted at Saint Quentin a letter addressed to M. de Miossens, at X——, and thus conceived:

Dear friend, or rather, Monsieur le Duc,

I have admired the perfect manners that you have shown. Your limitless kindness almost deprives me of the courage to make an observation which you would certainly not permit, and which I recognize as cruel, but necessary to your happiness and peace of mind. You are perfect, but your attentions weary me. I should prefer, I think, a simple peasant who would not eternally be busy making refined speeches and trying to please. I think I could love a man of frank disposition, and above all, one who was not so polite. I left your trunks and one thousand, five hundred and fifty francs at Cherbourg, in passing.

Fédor needed no more to precipitate him on the Cherbourg road, galloping at full speed to scan all the figures on the highway. In spite of Lamiel's letter he did not give up the folly of his search, which had occupied him ever since her flight. At Rouen, finding himself without money, mistress or linen, he almost conceived the notion of blowing out his brains. Never had man been so bewildered. All Lamiel's anticipations were fulfilled.

As for her, she would have entirely forgotten the young duke, who had the art of smothering love with kindness, did he not serve her as a point of comparison from which to judge other men.

Lamiel was so natural in her manner and so unpremeditated in her behavior that Mme. le Grand took to her as much as to make her a constant companion. Soon she found her boudoir tedious unless she saw the young girl there. Vainly her husband lectured her on the imprudence of admitting an unknown person to such intimacy; Mme. le Grand made no reply, but redoubled her friendship for our heroine. Several young men who spent money freely lived in the hotel; they paid court to Mme. le Grand, who was not displeased at their presence in her boudoir. She noticed with pleasure, and drew her husband's attention to it, that the sight of them was sufficient to make the young unknown cease talking; she certainly did not try to put herself in evidence.

At that time Lamiel's only passion was curiosity; never was creature so enquiring; that was perhaps the source of the friendship with Mme. le Grand, who liked to provide answers and explain everything. But Lamiel already understood that it was *essential* to be timorous, and never went out in the evening. She missed her visits to the theatre, but the memory of the commercial travellers made her prudent.

She saw the need for telling her story to Mme. le Grand, but to do so, she had to compose it. She distrusted her lightheadedness; she could not make a good liar because she forgot her lies. She put her narrative in writing, and in order to keep it in her chest of drawers, gave it the form of a letter to justify her conduct, addressed to an uncle, M. de Bonia.

She told Mme. le Grand, therefore, that she was the second daughter of a subprefect whose name she must not mention. This subprefect, madly ambitious, was not without hope of being included in the next batch of prefects and had nothing to refuse to a wealthy widower, affiliated to the Catholic party, and who promised to rally twenty-one legitimists to his support. But this M. de Tourte made it a condition of those twenty-one votes that he should marry Lamiel; she, however, held his yellow and meanly devout countenance in horror.

"I quite understand," said Mme. le Grand. "My poor Lamiel has picked out some handsome young man who, as far as fortune goes, has only hope."

"Well, it's not so!" cried Lamiel. "If it were, I should be less bored and should know what to do with my life. Love, which seems a sovereign happiness to all the world, seems a very insipid thing to me, and, if I dare say it, extremely boring."

"That means you've perhaps had a boring lover."

"I'm getting confused," thought Lamiel. "I shall have to fall back on the truth."

"No," she added, with the most candid air she could command, "I have been wooed. My first lover was called Berville and cared only for money. The other, called le Duc, was a great spendthrift, but it was the best day of my life when I made it impossible for him to see me again. An uncle left me one thousand, five hundred and fifty francs; the next day they had to be taken to the notary's, to be invested. I asked to see

from close-to those lovely gold Napoleons and the thousand franc note. It was eight in the evening; my father was away, busy with the election; so I ran away through the garden of the subprefecture with three cases that had just come from Paris, containing part of my trousseau, for M. de Tourte is as generous as he's ugly, which is saying a lot. My father will pay him for the dresses, which I'm very pleased with. When the election in our region is finished and the new set of prefects announced in the *Moniteur,* my father will be so overjoyed, if he's one of them, that he'll easily forgive me. It will be much more awkward if he remains a subprefect. This M. de Tourte is all-powerful over opinion in our district, his father is grand-vicar."

Next evening Lamiel, who had to repeat her story to good M. le Grand, reread the letter to her uncle. She had forgotten to explain the passport, and said:

"A subprefect, whose district is six leagues from ours, and with whom M. de Tourte refuses to shake hands, promised to get me a passport through one of his relations who's a mayor twenty-five leagues away from him, towards Rennes."

This narrative affected M. le Grand to the point of tears, and for a week provided the evening's conversation. After two days Mme. le Grand declared to her protégée that she loved her like her own child.

"All you've got is one thousand, five hundred and fifty francs, yet you take an apartment at five hundred. I'll give you one at a hundred and fifty where you'll do well enough. But I want absolutely to see you in

your lovely dresses, and on Tuesday I'll take you to visit M. Servières, where you'll meet young gentlemen with ten thousand francs a year, and make much better conquests than your horrible M. de Tourte, with his twenty-one rallied legitimists in his pocket."

"Well, my dear friend," replied Lamiel, "let me engage a dancing master. I feel that I don't walk properly, that I don't enter a drawing room as other people do. And let me sometimes take you to the Théâtre Français."

TWENTY-ONE

The Comte d'Aubigné-Nerwinde

ONE EVENING she was still with Mme. le Grand at midnight, and, as a diversion, had taken it upon herself to entertain Madame's fat husband. She was studying in him the complete absence of imagination, when a great din was heard in the street, and shortly after, at the door of the house. It was one of the hotel's young inhabitants being brought home dead-drunk.

"Ah! it's the Comte d'Aubigné-Nerwinde," cried Mme. le Grand.

He was what is called in Paris "a very amiable young man," who busied himself in gaily running through a fortune of eighty thousand livres a year left him by the gallant General d'Aubigné, so famous in the wars of Napoleon. He had inherited only three years ago and already found himself reduced to furnished lodgings. He had been obliged to sell his house.

That evening, d'Aubigné's drunkenness took the form of talking incessantly and not wanting to go to his rooms.

"What's the use of going up two floors, when I'll have to come down them tomorrow?"

It was impossible for Mme. le Grand, who had undertaken to get him upstairs, to extract any other words from him.

On the departure of the two servants who had brought him, he threatened to punch those of the hotel *in the English style* for getting on his nerves. They asked Madame to excuse them from attending to *so unpleasant a creature*. The count caught the words at random.

"No, no! By heavens, no! She's not an unpleasant creature. I do notice that she stops talking when I come to see Mme. le Grand, but I don't mind that. There's something strange and original about that young woman. I'd like to take over her training. Those big strides of hers would make me blush when I gave her my arm; she doesn't wear her shawl the right way; but I'm going to make her like me, or I'll die in the attempt. Plenty of others have liked me—yes, that's what it is, she's not the same as others. And don't tell me to go upstairs, because I don't want to be like others either. They all go upstairs, and I won't; aren't I right, Mme. le Grand? What's the use of going upstairs if you've got to come down again tomorrow morning?"

This babbling went on for over an hour. Mme. le Grand was most embarrassed. She had been a maid in a good house and possessed such a fund of politeness, especially towards a young man who ruined himself

in the best style, that for nothing in the world would she have treated the count roughly. Yet it was time for bed, and she was thinking of having the cooks and the cooks' assistants called, when the count began once more to explain his projects for Lamiel.

So Mme. le Grand called the young girl, who had taken flight on hearing her name mentioned, and begged her to order the Comte d'Aubigné to go up to his rooms.

"But, my dear Madame, remember that if I do, the count will consider himself entitled to speak to me tomorrow."

"He won't remember anything tomorrow, and he'll come to apologize. I know him; it's not the first time he's come back in this state. I shall have to ask him, quite politely, to choose another hotel. He's of the highest nobility and he will *Thee and Thou* the servants; that's why they don't want to carry him to his apartment."

"Does he often get drunk?" asked Lamiel.

"Every day, I believe. His life's one folly after another. It's his desire to pass for the maddest of all the young men who make a show in the boxes at the Opera. Quite lately, when he wasn't as much himself as he is this evening, he took it into his head to give the cabman who drove him back a thrashing with his cane."

"Ah, he's not a pretty doll like my duke." The idea of seeing him beat the cabman who brought him home

appealed to Lamiel. She advanced to the stairs and said firmly:

"Monsieur le comte d'Aubigné, go up at once to Number Twelve!"

D'Aubigné stopped babbling; he gazed at her intently, then said:

"That's the way to talk; everybody else says, 'Go up to your rooms.' This intelligent person, quite new to things, just up from the country, thinks that I've forgotten the number of my apartment; she says, 'Go up to Number Twelve!' That's what I call perfect politeness—And shall it be said that d'Aubigné disobeyed a pretty woman's orders? And a woman who, for the moment, is without a lover? Never! Mademoiselle Lamiel, I obey you, and I'm going up to Number Twelve——Not Number Eleven, and not Number Thirteen—hang it all, Thirteen's bad luck!—but Number Twelve exactly!"

He took the candle that Mme. le Grand gave him, and mounted resolutely to Number Twelve, constantly repeating that he could refuse nothing to a young lady who, for the time being, was without a lover.

Next day, clad in a magnificent dressing gown and stretched out in his Voltaire armchair, the count said to the first of the hotel servants to enter his rooms:

"Well, you scamp, tell me what I did last night, when I came back rather gay."

"I've told you already," was the reply, in the rough

tone of a servant in a rage, "that I won't answer when you speak to me like that!"

The count threw him a crown piece; the man picked it up and raised his arm as though to hurl it back at his head.

"Well, well!" exclaimed the count affectedly, remembering Firmin of the Théâtre Français in the role of Moncade.

"I don't know what stops me throwing it in your face," said the servant, turning pale, "but I'm afraid of breaking Madame's china."

He turned towards the open window and looked at it for a moment, then through it hurled the coin which, flying right across the Rue de Rivoli, rebounded from the railings of the Terrasse des Feuillants, where twenty urchins started fighting for it. This spectacle seemed to calm him, for he said to the count, with all the superiority of intelligence and physical strength:

"If you want to stick to your insolent manners, you ought to have arranged to keep your wretched servants who put up with them, and not have ruined yourself. You shouldn't have got to the point of being afraid of a stay in the debtor's gaol. But the fear of Clichy's reduced you to making a pretended sale to Madame of the armchairs and mirrors you've cluttered up this apartment with. When one wants to be a fine gentleman, the first thing is, not to be poor. What would your father, the brave General d'Aubigné, have

said, if he saw you'd come down to not daring to go out before sunset?"

"Well, my dear Georges, since you wouldn't take the first crown, here's a second, for your good advice."

Georges took it; he would have let the general of the Empire kick him, so sacred is Napoleon's memory among the people, who have retained none of the Republic. For without a sovereign, the people recognize no greatness.

The count was enraptured with the way he had turned Georges's insolence. He was a being who became bored the moment he was unoccupied; his heart furnished him no resource whatever.

"Now I must give thought to Mme. le Grand. Am I to treat that venerable former lady's maid with a lofty fatuity, with a haughtiness suited to my past fortune, or shall I ape the affable fellow? Yes, indeed! The affable fellow!" cried the count. "I was quite forgetting that big girl, Lamiel, whom I've got to possess. What sort of a girl is she? Has she belonged to somebody already, or is she a provincial in flight from an angry family? If she's utterly stupid, my last night's tipsiness will have shocked her. So my line must be affability and gaiety; the Le Grand will read me a sermon, but I shall find something out about Lamiel."

The count, whose ideas were gradually clarifying, went downstairs in his magnificent dressing gown.

"My dear Madame le Grand, my dear friend, could you make me a cup of tea rather quickly and tell me

a little of what I did and said when I came back last night?—Ah, Mademoiselle Lamiel!" said he, pretending to see her for the first time and saluting her with great respect. "I'd have given two thousand-franc notes if you'd gone upstairs to your room before eleven, yesterday evening. We dined at eight, and I remember hearing the clock strike ten; but after that, my mind's a blank, I read nothing in it."

"Alas, Monsieur le Comte, I'm in despair at having to tell you something disagreeable. None of the servants want to go up to your rooms any more; you've horrified them, and I can't send quite good servants away because they won't take on the sort of work for which they weren't engaged. M. le Grand joins me in asking you to look for another apartment. Wouldn't any stranger think badly of my hotel if he heard a scene like last night's? You were talking all the time and said things that were most improper."

"About love, I'll bet. Nothing interests me in life, neither horses nor cards, I'm quite different from other young men. If there's no tender heart for me to live with in perfect intimacy, I'm bored; every day seems a century, and then, for distraction, I let myself be asked to dinner, and since my heart's empty——"

"Ah, you villain!" cried Mme. le Grand, abandoning her serious expression, "it's because there are other ears than mine to hear you that you dare to speak of sentiment. Dare you really say that you care for anything but a good horse or a well-cut coat of a new color that makes you look smart in the morning

when you're walking in the Bois de Boulogne, or in the evening in your box at the Opera, or behind the scenes?"

"You tell me, my excellent hostess, to take another apartment and have my own servants. Do you believe it's for pleasure that a d'Aubigné-Nerwinde inhabits an inn, even though it's very decently kept and a model of its kind? You're forgetting that, for the moment, I'm ruined. Do I even know if in two months' time I'll be in a position to rent two miserable rooms? But luckily heaven's preserved in me the character of my ancestors. My kinswoman, Mme. de Maintenon, was born in prison; she married an ignoble buffoon, a Scarron, but when she died she was none the less the wife of the greatest king who ever mounted the French throne. Well, there are days when my prison bores me, for after all, a hotel, however well kept it may be, with servants who won't obey me—isn't that a prison? And can you blame me for letting myself go in a moment of tipsiness that gives me a chance of forgetting my misery? In this moment of poverty I'm only too serious, I have the unhappiness to be madly in love and I know how it affects me. For me, love isn't an out-of-date joke; it's the love felt by the knights of the Middle Ages and which leads to great deeds."

Lamiel blushed deeply, which the count perceived.

"That beautiful lady is mine," he said to himself. "What an effect she'll make at the Opera if I can dress her properly. Take care, d'Aubigné! She's a young

gazelle that you want to put in a cage; you mustn't let her jump over the bars. Be careful!"

In Lamiel's eyes the count seemed a brilliant and very amusing young man; though he did not say a word that was not learnt by heart, he yet made all the more of an impression. All his eloquent speeches were calculated in advance and arranged so as to arrest attention by their striking contrasts—from delightful periods most charmingly light-hearted to sudden flashes of deepest pathos. He saw the effect produced on the young girl who said nothing, seated in a corner of the boudoir, but changed color at the more emphatic places in *the development of the count's situation*. Mme. le Grand's reproaches and advice gave him a very appropriate occasion for talking about himself, and he used it to the full. He saw also that he greatly interested Mme. le Grand herself, a former lady's maid in a good house (that of the Comtesse de Damas) and accustomed to respect and admire rich young men who conducted themselves and dealt with the world and with fortune like M. d'Aubigné-Nerwinde.

TWENTY-TWO

The Pistol Shot

D'Aubigné was a copy of those young great aristocrats of whom the last died of old age under Charles X —old men well larded with pretentions and dribbling out cruel maxims which happily they had not the power to apply. D'Aubigné was not a careless and gay young noble, but as a copy of an agreeable noble he was a careless and gay young man. Lamiel had not enough experience to recognize this difference; she had a great deal of intelligence because she had a great soul, but hers was not a spirit of comparison and study; she was very far from being able to judge herself and others.

Seated in a corner and plunged in a silence full of agitation, she ceaselessly compared d'Aubigné to the Duc de Miossens and showed herself very unfair to that poor young man. It was his natural, absolute lack of imagination, his simple manner of saying the most decisive things, and, in a word, his tone of perfect breeding which did him wrong in his former mistress's eyes. She gave the names of *"timidity"* and

"extreme prudence" to the amiable young man's really simple and natural behavior, while the count's tinsel seemed to her to bespeak the most energetic kind of character; she saw him hurling himself with truly chivalrous valor into the chanceful turmoil of events.

The next day the count, who was watching for her behind his half-opened door, risked speaking to her on her way up to her room. She answered him with cold reasonableness, but without seeming shocked at his overture. The *naturalness* of Lamiel's character was inscribed upon her brow.

"She's mine," said the count to himself, "but how can I dress her? She has no stock in her wardrobe. God knows what's in those two great trunks I saw taken up to her rooms! I don't pay court in order to be obscurely amused in a hotel, like some law student. I'm not going to expend my efforts unseen. If I want her, it's to exhibit my triumph; it's to show her at the Opera and the Bois de Boulogne. It's because it's a matter of the *first fruits,* of recounting her history and making it exciting. I'll need at least four thousand francs to make her worthy of appearing on my arm. No, Mademoiselle, your virtue seems very eager to make a leap in the dark, but you shan't have that pleasure until I've got hold of four thousand francs. There will have to be gifts, coming like a clap of thunder on the morning after your defeat, and you, the first, must think you are engaged with a wealthy

young nobleman who throws his money out of the window, as I used to do a couple of years ago."

While d'Aubigné gave himself over to these prudent reflections (prudence was his strong point), Lamiel was feeling extremely pleased and believed him to be the maddest and most natural of young men.

"He's not a little boring Cato and always the same. like the duke."

The count studied his re-entries to the hotel; he was quite sure of Lamiel's presence in Mme. le Grand's boudoir on the ground floor, with its fine window under the arcades of the Rue de Rivoli and a fanlight on the stairway. At twenty paces from the hotel he began walking with carefree step. But his prudence was counteracted by events.

He had got together nearly a hundred louis for his future mistress's equipment and was already occupied with the choice of the name under which he would introduce her to the Bois de Boulogne. Her admirable freshness and the bloom of her complexion had decided him to bring her out first in the full daylight of the Bois rather than under the lamps of the Opera. He hoped still to obtain credit for a hundred louis or three thousand francs from the shopkeepers when there came the date of the racing at Chantilly. Unfortunately he had only thought of it a week before.

"I have no longer the time to be ill," he said to himself with vexation and striking his forehead.

"D'Eberley and Montandon have made the most of that excuse."

He fell into . . .[1] and said to Lamiel with an intense expression:

"I adore you, and you put me in despair."

The very morning of the day when he said this, Mme. le Grand had remarked on his profound depression. His words to Lamiel completely missed their effect; they brought suggestions of boredom. The duke, who bored her so much, had spoken them twenty times better. Had she at that time possessed the talent of reading her own heart, she would have said to the count:

"I like you, but only as long as you never speak the language of passion."

The count was tormented by the thought of Chantilly and was still very undecided when, in the evening, at the Jockey Club, there was talk of one of his friends, a young man who took to cover as the races approached, and pretended to be ill.

"Who squeezes too hard embraces badly," he said to himself. "To the Devil with that little provincial! I'm lost, considering what they say about me, if, with my passion for horses, I don't appear at Chantilly."

On the eve of the great day, he said to Lamiel:

"I shall try and break my neck, since your cruelty makes life unbearable."

Lamiel was shocked at these words.

"Why does he think I'm cruel?" she said to herself,

[1] Blank in the manuscript.

laughing. "Has he ever put me in a position to refuse him anything serious?"

The fact is that all women's society bored the count. Lamiel, as she was still altogether an honest woman, bored him still more; so he courted our heroine with fine phrases, but for nothing in the world would he have passed five minutes alone with her. His art lay in making Lamiel believe that he was dying to make her a declaration and that it was her cruelty which deprived him of the possibility of such happiness.

Lamiel, quite indifferent to what is called love and its pleasures, thought:

"If I unite with the count, he'll take me to the theatre. My one thousand, five hundred and fifty francs are already greatly reduced, but he won't be able to give me money because he hasn't got any."

"There's no change in regard to my family," she told Mme. le Grand. "The elections are put off. M. de Tourte is no doubt more powerful than ever. That M. X——, the liberal, who writes for *Commerce* and lives on the sixth floor, says that the Catholic party will come back. What shall I do for a living? I haven't more than eight hundred francs."

Lamiel subscribed to two libraries and passed her time in reading. Hardly any longer did she dare to go for a walk or an omnibus ride by herself. The green stains on her left cheek were certain of their effect no more. She was so well formed, there was such spirit in her look, that every day she had to repulse

advances which were often of the coarsest kind. She allowed herself to speak only to Mme. le Grand and M. ——, her dancing master, a good young man, honest and limited, who had not failed to fall in love with his pupil and to whom Mme. le Grand had made a confidence of the subprefect father, M. de Tourte and the rest of the story. The sum total of Lamiel's life was not amusing. The impossibility of going for walks was bad for her health and her boredom was completed by missing the theatre. D'Aubigné's fatuity was on the point of triumph, had he but given her more opportunities to speak directly from her heart. She had so little vanity that she would have been quite open with him at the first moment of impatience in which he surprised her.

It was in these circumstances that Chantilly arrived. The count went there and lost seventeen thousand francs in bets. He completed his ruin, exhausted all the credit he could still command and nobly paid the whole amount before the end of the week. The Comte d'Aubigné-Nerwinde was at heart very prudent and wise to the point of avarice.

"I have already three or four judgments against me which might lead to Clichy. I owe it to myself to possess that little provincial. Once that duty's done, it will be a matter of disappearing *in toto*. I'll go to pass my time at Versailles, where I have acquaintances among the poor devils who yawn away in the company of the ruined English in that dreary town. Good God! What evenings I shall have!"

Lamiel was bored nearly to death; the count only needed two days' more effort.

"Will you take me to the theatre this evening?" she asked him.

"This evening, if I've settled my affairs, I intend to blow out my brains."

Lamiel uttered a cry and the count was delighted to produce such a result.

"You will have my last thought, my lovely Lamiel; you will have been my last happiness. If you had been less cruel to me a week ago, I would not have gone to the races at Chantilly. I lost seventeen thousand francs there. I've paid, as honor demanded, by exhausting all my resources, and I've one thousand-franc note left. But the Comte d'Aubigné-Nerwinde, the son of a hero known to the whole of France, mustn't let himself be seen in an inferior position. I've got a horrible sister who's very rich, twenty years older than me, but extremely strait-laced and very little fitted to understand a life directed by love and chance. Besides, she's married a Miossens and I'm only a d'Aubigné-Nerwinde."

"A Miossens—is she related to the duke?"

"He's her great-uncle; but how do you know the name?"

Lamiel blushed.

"M. de Tourte, whom I'm supposed to marry, was always talking of Miossens; the family's agent provided him with four votes."

Already Lamiel knew how to lie a little, but she was still too emphatic about it; she did not throw off her lies as things of no consequence; she had still much to learn. What caused her to lie was a maxim often repeated by Mme. le Grand since they had taken to being candid with each other—"Be rich if you can, wise if you want, but you must be esteemed."

The intimacy with the count lasted half a day. By the evening Lamiel already found in him a dryness of spirit which checked the flow of his words. His phrases had great dignity, but this dignity cost him great effort, which Lamiel perceived, though possibly she could not have named the cause of her boredom. Only, he was the opposite of the wild, thoughtless young man she had imagined and really loved because she imagined he was so unlike the duke. The idea of the pistol shot, for she believed all that was extraordinary, soon put her boredom to flight. She looked at d'Aubigné:

"Is that handsome face, so cold and so noble, the face of a man who is going to kill himself in a few hours? He behaves with perfect calm."

The count packed his trunks and seemed absorbed in the care of not damaging his belongings. Proud of his skill in packing, he just then closely resembled a commercial traveller. But Lamiel noticed nothing; her soul was deeply stirred over the pistol shot that was so imminent. The trunks were addressed to his sister. He went with them to the diligence for Périgueux,

and from the diligence office had them taken to Versailles by a hired man. The next morning, Mme. le Grand received the customary letter:

"By the time you read these words . . . etc."

Lamiel bowed her head as she listened and soon was stifled by her sobs. M. le Grand cried:

"But that's sixteen hundred and sixty-seven francs that we're losing," and he set himself again to making up the count's *real* bill; he wanted to know his *real* loss. The bill to be presented was for sixteen hundred and sixty-seven francs, the real one amounted only to nine hundred.

"Last year our losses were four per cent of our gross receipts; this year they're going to be six per cent, for I don't include the value of the poor count's chairs and china; he may have disposed of them by will."

All this discussion plunged Lamiel in deep gloom. She certainly felt no love for the count; the sentiment which wrung her heart was but simple humanity.

TWENTY-THREE

The Hatter of Périgueux

At Versailles, amid a devout and all-bewailing society, the count nearly perished of tedium; but he was circumspect above all, and an act of his rare prudence corrected his ill-fortune. To be well received in spite of his poverty, which began to be evident, he took it on himself to pay court to an aged marquise, Mme. de Sassenage, one of the firmest supporters of the Church party in the district. His hard character and keen vanity gave her matter to occupy her mind. She was less troubled with boredom, and to oblige him to continue courting her, she conceived the notion of engaging him to take Orders. The count, who knew how to exploit his name with the utmost cunning, said to her gravely:

"In that case, the Nerwindes will become extinct. I'm the last of the name, and I owe it to my father's glory and the memory which France preserves of a hero and a friend of Jourdain to consult my sister on so important a step."

The Marquise de Sassenage thought that these words should be conveyed to the baroness, who was always

ill and to whom her great devotion had opened the drawing rooms of the ancient nobility of Périgueux through the director of her conscience. This director was also ill at the time, and it was the Bishop of X—— himself who went to inform the wealthy and important devotee. He was himself of a family belonging to the old-established nobility of Béarn; he counted among his ancestors a *cordon rouge* under Louis XV. By chance he spoke pathetically to the baroness on the fall of the *nobility* and his pathos was for her the most agreeable flattery. She was, then, a member of the true nobility in the eyes of this man of such good family.

Two days later the baroness made a new will. She left all her possessions to her brother Ephraim, Comte de Nerwinde, whom she had visited with such malediction. This legacy amounted to almost *a million;* but she attached to it one condition: she desired him to marry before the age of forty. A few days after, pity for her young brother's title played havoc with her lively imagination. The baroness sent him, with whom for two years she had been at daggers drawn, a letter of change for six thousand francs. She announced her intention of giving him an annual allowance of the same amount and let him know that he would be her heir.

The count received this letter at four o'clock, as he was just going to dine with the Marquise de Sassenage, where he was awaited. He did not give two seconds to pleasure or surprise. Hearts dominated by vanity

instinctively fear emotion, it is the high road to the ridiculous.

"How," he asked himself, "can I make a witty story about this, which will do me honor at the Club?"

He set off for Paris, ran up the stairs to Lamiel's room, and, without deigning to reply to good Mme. le Grand's cry of joy, threw open her door with a clatter and falling on his knees:

"I owe you my life," he cried to her. "My passion for you made me fire into the air the pistol I'd just loaded. Once I was calm again, and thinking of your divine charm, I made known to my sister the state of my fortune. The blood of the Nerwindes cannot deny its own; she sent me a packet of letters of change, and you've still time to dress before the Opera."

The thought of the Opera, and of being there within an hour, made our heroine swiftly dismiss the sad vision of the Comte d'Aubigné-Nerwinde slain with a pistol shot. They entered various shops where the young provincial changed her dress, her hat and her shawl. On the way to the Opera, the count said to her:

"I'm frightened about your father, the subprefect. If he succeeds in his election, they won't refuse him a permit to seize his rebellious daughter—and what will become of my love?" he added with a cold expression.

Lamiel looked at him and smiled.

"Call yourself Madame de Saint-Serve. I'm choosing that name for you because I have a passport for

abroad, perfectly made out in the name of Saint-Serve."

"But I should be inheriting the lady's fine actions, and goodness knows what actions they are?"

"She was a young girl not so pretty as you, but she, too, had a very dangerous father. When she went away, we thought it wiser for her to be entered on her lover's passport as his wife. It commands respect abroad."

The count's resurrection was an event at the Opera and he was at the peak of happiness. Mme. de Saint-Serve had all possible success.

The next day Nerwinde hid while his friends treated with his creditors. All of them who were not frequenters of the Opera believed him dead.

On leaving the Opera, the count had taken Lamiel to a little apartment in the Rue Neuve-des-Mathurins.

"If you'll take my advice," he said to Lamiel, whom the Opera had delighted, "you'll stop seeing Mme. le Grand. She might say that Mme. de Saint-Serve is an acquaintance of Mlle. Lamiel. Write me on a scrap of paper what you owe her, and tomorrow an unknown person will pay her and say good-bye for you."

During that evening from seven to midnight, Nerwinde, riddled with debts and with cause to fear next day the results of four judgments committing him to the prison of Clichy, having for all his wealth in the world only an order for six thousand francs, which he showed to nobody, bought all that goes to compose the wardrobe of a woman of the highest fashion, and

the shopkeepers thanked him while, as he made his purchases in their establishments, he had the air of conferring a favor on them.

It was the triumph of a character cold, reserved, always calculating and fearing nothing in the world but physical suffering for his cherished person, or the disarray of his vanity. This cold and timid character had been formed by an epoch of vanity and boredom; before 1789, it would have been considered utterly dull; it would have appeared in comedies as the character of a cold and self-important Gascon.

The women of our day no longer having a say in the matter, Nerwinde, little made to please them, owed his brilliant reputation to two duels and especially to his small lustreless eyes which seemed to betoken inflexible resolution. His features, slightly Kalmuck but still noble, only escaped appearing common by their coldness, their profound amiability and an expression tinged with sadness or, rather, physical pain. Naturally rebellious to mobility, they never revealed anything but what they were made to say. They admirably hid the frequent bitterness of a frigid but passionately egotistical spirit; the least prospect of suffering in his cherished person overwhelmed the count to the extent of making him shed tears. M. de Menton once said of him:

"He's a crafty chess player whom public stupidity takes for a poet."

The Comte d'Aubigné-Nerwinde, by his guarded seriousness, gloomy and always occupied with what

others thought of him, with the look of a wolf hiding beside the highway and waiting for a sheep to pass, was especially at home in a company of twenty people. He spoke with effort and with an anxiety to be elegant which shocked persons of delicate taste; but he had a passion for talking and telling anecdotes, and was coarse enough by nature not to realize his disasters.

This passion for talking and telling anecdotes, and being right about everything, put him to the torture if anyone else related the least detail in front of him. To all that was said, he had a series of sharp objections which prevented the progress of the least conversation in his presence. The intimacy of life was a torture to him. His air of suffering, or at least a menacing and easily offensive air, suppressed sudden flights and agreeable sensations—those sallies which make the pleasure of French conversation and always need a certain degree of confidence in the auditors whose self-esteem they often mock.

However indulgent the interlocutor's philosophy, however great his solicitude for the general pleasure, the count's unceasing contradictions prevented conversation on even the simplest topics.

Lamiel was far from being able to realize all this. Good, simple, gay and happy, without malice to the bottom of her heart, she could not divine the source of his discontent with life. She was delighted with the part which the count had given her to play in the world, and with the height at which he had placed

her. Her conversation would not have been so sparkling, brilliant and intelligent were she not heard with a religious attention. If that is not already acquired, one must force one's points, like replies in comedy.

"And to what do I owe this preliminary indulgence from people dining with us for the first time? Simply to the consideration which the count has obtained for himself. But apparently the pains he takes for that purpose tire him; this makes him bad-tempered when we are alone together. Well, we must be alone together as little as possible. When I get home, all my happiness vanishes; when there is no one else present, he becomes snappish and almost insulting—he who shows himself so ceremoniously polite in society. It seems as though I hurt him when I speak to him, even if only to ask his opinion about something."

All these reflections, more felt than clearly perceived, crowded in on Lamiel as she was looking at her hair in the mirror before putting it in curlpapers.

"Only a moment ago, when I took off my hat, there was a laugh on my lips," she said to herself, "and now my expression's mournful and I have to control myself so as not to be angry. And good God, it's the same every evening! Apparently this man, who appears so impressive, is wearied by the effort he makes to keep his dominion in the world, and when he's weary he's bad-tempered."

She ran to her room and locked the door.

It was only a week after their first evening at the

Opera; Lamiel had the effortless courage of a perfectly natural character.

"What's the meaning of that?" cried the count with a sombre air, when he heard the sound of the closing door.

For a joke Lamiel mimicked the sharp, brutal tones of her noble lover.

"It means," she called through the door, "that I'm tired of your noble presence."

"Well, upon my soul, all the better," thought Nerwinde. "Why should I tear my nerves to pieces over a creature that everybody sees I can do what I like with. The important thing is, that with her looks and the intelligence I breathe into her, she does me credit in the eyes of the world. I'll punish the little shrew. I'll wait until she calls me into her room, and certainly I won't let her see that her extraordinary whim's upset me."

It may be asked what was the moral basis of the count's strange character. Pretentiousness—fatal pretentiousness, one of the chief causes of nineteenth-century depression! Nerwinde was dying with fear lest he might not be taken for a genuine count.

The misfortune of a character apparently so firm was, in the first place, to be feeble to the point of cowardice; the simplest and most haphazard pleasantry, whose lack of wit condemned it to instant death, would start a week's sulking. In the second place, M. d'Aubigné-Nerwinde used completely to forget his glorious father, known throughout France and the

whole of Europe, General Boucaud, Comte de Nerwinde, and thought ceaselessly of his grandfather Boucaud, a little hatter of Périgueux.

Can such excess of pride, susceptibility and weakness be believed? The least joke about trade, still more the remark of anyone who happened to say in his presence, "I've just bought a hat," made him glare straight in the eyes of the man who uttered so curious a remark, and put him beside himself with rage for a whole day. The problem which then arose was as follows:

"Must I let that stab pass unnoticed, or must I show my anger?"

From the age of sixteen, Nerwinde was tormented by the words, *"A little hatter with a shop in the outskirts of Périgueux."* What hope was there that the grandson of Boucaud the hatter would be taken for a real count? If Boucaud was mentioned in his hearing, he blushed, whence came his impassive countenance. It was absolutely necessary to hide the anxiety that harassed him at every moment, and from this arose further his supreme competence with a pistol.

The mistress best suited to him, who would have brought him a quiet, and soon a happy, life, would have been a high-born woman who said to him ten times a day:

"Yes, my noble Ephraim, you're a genuine count, you have all that a man of high birth requires, even to the little faults of pronunciation. They clipped their accents at Versailles, and you do the same. You

have even the little absurdities of M. de Talleyrand's contemporaries."

The Comte de Nerwinde should have been *aide de camp* to a prince whose rights were not recognized as altogether unchallengeable. Etiquette was his strong point, his chief source of delight, and he was one of the instigators of a group which attempted to ennoble itself by debauch, scandal, and startling conversation, by pretending to make a joke of everything and even of things supposed to be respectable. What an existence for the grandson of a hatter!

TWENTY-FOUR

Separate Beds

AMONG ALL her joyous companions of pleasure, Lamiel especially remarked Caillot, a young actress at the Variétés, who had great intelligence, and intelligence of a very impious kind.

At a picnic at Meudon they walked together far into the wood, and, after a long talk, extremely serious on Lamiel's part, Caillot instructed her not to force her wit but to keep on making the best of the pleasant and novel ideas which, even for her, flowed into her mind in so unexpected a fashion.

"Sometimes it's impossible to understand you," said Caillot. "Explain more, and in more words, what you mean, and don't use words of the Normandy dialect."

Lamiel was profuse in thanks that were sincerely admiring. Caillot was one of her passions.

"You'll be a hundred times better than I," Caillot replied to Lamiel's heart-felt praise. "You have only one snag to beware. When you're dazzled by the transports of gaiety that I sometimes start, don't try

to imitate me. If your heart tells you so, you must dare to be the opposite of what you see I am."

With deep interior pride the count saw that since the appearance of Mme. de Saint-Serve he was more sought after. The authority he enjoyed among men of pleasure made giant strides.

It happened to be a hot summer, and country amusements were all the fashion. The cold and rain of previous years imparted an atmosphere of novelty. The richest of the count's companions of pleasure gave dinners in honor of Mme. de Saint-Serve.

Often, also, to be free from a kind of restraint imposed by the view of a host in his house, they organized picnics at Maisons, Meudon, Poissy and even as far away as Roche-Guyon. But Lamiel's decided taste imposed the rule that all first nights at the theatre must be attended. She wanted to apply the principles of her teacher of literature. She had an army of tutors and worked like a scholar. She even learnt mathematics. After the parties in the country they reached the theatre at nine and Lamiel's arrival produced all the effect that could be desired. But the count scolded her every time for not making a disturbance when she entered their box.

"Do you always want to be like a lady's maid who's borrowed her mistress's box and her gown?"

The charming graces which made Lamiel so new a being to Paris in 183–, and which at once raised her to the first place in all the drawing rooms of the women of easy virtue where she made her first ap-

pearance, had no merit in the eyes of the count, and even displeased him. These graces, which were piquant, owed all their triumph: firstly, to their novelty; secondly, to being exquisitely natural, and, precisely, to their constant intimation that she was indebted to no fashionable drawing room for her personality. She realized the graces of good society, she had even learnt to model herself exclusively upon them; but she also comprehended that their exaggeration during the reigns of Charles X and Louis XVIII was utterly boring. She had always present to her mind the Duchesse de Miossens's drawing room, where she was bored to the point of falling ill. To this former affliction she owed it that she now became so seductive. Her lively character, which was almost that of the southern races, might well have always made difficult for her the constrained and slowed-down movements which, in our time, form the basis of drawing room behavior in the Faubourg Saint-Germain. But it was clearly to be seen, beyond the freest manifestations of her natural self, that she would have known at need how to act with complete propriety, how to be in the best of style, and the frankness of her manner seemed almost an act of benevolence by which one was called into her presence to the honors and ease of intimacy.

Yet the fear of not being sufficiently respected, which was the count's torment, made him radically insensible to such graces. The charm of Lamiel's manner was evident above all in the country pleasure

parties which now occupied every day of her life. But the gentlemen who attended them were hardly philosophers, and by nature little observant; they could not analyze her attraction, which seemed therefore all the more delightful.

Once Larduel, one of the troop's jesters, enraptured by Lamiel's graces, cried in his enthusiasm:

"She's such high-class company!"

"She's a great deal more than that," said the old Baron de Prévan, who was these young men's dictator. "She's an intelligence whom the tone of high-class company bores. With her gay, gentle air she's boldness itself; she has the courage, more human than feminine, to brave your disdain, and that's why she's inimitable. Look at her well, gentlemen; if ever she has the whim to desert you, you'll never see her like."

Another peculiarity preserved Lamiel's incalculable eminence. In the midst of dinners which more and more degenerated into orgies, one saw a woman with a charming face, who had evidently no taste for the pleasure which is supposed to be the bond of such society. It was obvious that license, or what in that world, as elsewhere, is called *pleasure,* made no appeal to her. Incredible as it was, women did not hate her; without doubt, they were astounded at her extraordinary success, but: first, *pleasure* meant nothing to her; second, she treated her comrades with a gay and delicate politeness which captivated them. Besides, with all her wit and her habit of laughing at everything which the count found so shocking, and

endowed with such *young* and irresistible beauty, she never sharply and untowardly called attention to the unpleasant features of her comrades' looks or character.

An epigram was something which her tongue never uttered; she was never caught in a spiteful word on the antecedents, often scandalous, of her new friends. Nothing could be more understandable, for Lamiel was nothing less than sure that the conduct of those ladies was to blame. She pondered, she doubted, she did not know what opinion to adopt about anything; curiosity was ever her one devouring passion.

The life which, in his pride, the Comte d'Aubigné-Nerwinde made her lead had in her eyes only these advantages:

First. She perceived, from what everybody said, that this kind of life was generally envied.

Second. It was physically agreeable; the excellent dinners, the swift and comfortable carriages, the sumptuous, well-warmed theatre boxes, hung with fresh material and provided with cushions in the latest style—these had a worth it was impossible to deny. The lack of all such brilliant accompaniments might have jarred on Lamiel and perhaps depressed her (I am not always certain of this); but she did not find their presence a sufficient happiness in itself.

The old problem that troubled her (in the Hautemares' village) still preserved all its force in the depths of her heart—"Does love, of which all these young

men talk, really exist for them with the quality of a supreme pleasure, and am I insensible to it?"

"Well, gentlemen," said the count one day to the friends who marvelled at his good fortune, "I don't let myself be captivated by what dazzles you; whether it's a merit or a defect of the character that heaven's given me, I'm not the dupe of this Mme. de Saint-Serve—of this peerless beauty whom you seem to enjoy spoiling for me with all your flattery. I have an infallible way of keeping down her pride. As sure as I stand here, for the last two months—that's to say, from the first week after I came back to Paris—we occupy separate beds."

These words charged with vanity altered everything among the count's friends. Those gentlemen saw Lamiel intoxicated with such delight by her happiness at the pleasures of society, and so vivaciously taking part in their festivities, that they thought her the happiest of women. Faithful to the vulgar ideas which were fashionable with them, which made pleasure one of the elements of happiness, they could not reconcile perfect contentment with *separate beds.* So those same gentlemen took hope and conceived projects. Six months after the count's imprudent avowal, all his friends had tried their fortune with Lamiel and all had been refused, modestly and without any pretense of feminine virtue:

"One day, perhaps; but not at present!"

But one evening, as they came down through the

forest of Saint Germain to take the steamer to the Port des Maisons, Lamiel saw that Caillot's eyes were moist with happiness, and in that moment discovered something rather affected in the party's gaiety. They were tickling each other to produce laughter, and it seemed to her that wit had been lacking for the last quarter of an hour. At once she made up her mind.

"Who is the most intelligent of all these gentlemen, your lover excepted, of course?" she asked Caillot.

"Larduel."

"Who is the consoler I ought to choose, to give as much pain as I can to the count, whose pomposity's abominable this evening?"

"The Marquis de la Vernaye."

"What! that frigid fellow?"

"Talk to him for an instant; you'll see if he's so frigid; he adores you. From him you'll get deep, serious love, pathetic and boring."

"You're very depressed this evening?" said Lamiel with a smile, going up to La Vernaye.

At first sight there was something cold and reserved about him which reminded Lamiel of the boredom she suffered from the Duc de Miossens. He addressed such graceful, well-composed compliments to her that she looked round for Larduel; he was more than a hundred yards away, engaged in conversation with Mlle. Deverny, of the Opera, who wanted to ride down to the steamer on a donkey.

"You're in luck just now," said Lamiel to La Vernaye.

"In what way?"

"Because I'm not in the humor to laugh at your compliments, modelled on Mme. de Sévigné. Be a good, simple boy, and console me for the majesty of my lord and master, the Comte d'Aubigné-Nerwinde, if you want to deserve my taking a fancy to you."

These words made La Vernaye forget his fund of polite-society compliments; he dismissed his memory, and, finding himself rich on his own account, said what he thought at the very moment, without much troubling over the incorrectness of the phrases that might escape him impromptu.

This first infidelity gave Lamiel neither happiness nor much pleasure. As soon as La Vernaye became glacial again, he reverted to his eloquence in the manner of Mme. de Sévigné; as Lamiel said, to the style of *"I'm ill with your chest."*[1]

"Do you know what does you a lot of harm?" she said to the marquis. "There are two things:

"First. It's nearly a hundred and twenty years since it occurred to somebody to print Mme. de Sévigné's letters;

"Second. Your laundress puts too much starch in your shirt frills, which makes your gracefulness seem stiff. Try and be a little more as if you'd left college."

The marquis was coming back to see her in the morning for the third time, returning at a gallop from the Bois de Boulogne, where he had left the count,

[1] Mme. de Sévigné.

when she heard d'Aubigné's carriage re-enter the courtyard; she rushed downstairs:

"Quick! Quick!" she cried to the coachman as she jumped in, without waiting for the footman to offer his arm. "Go as fast as you can: I don't want to be home to a friend I made an appointment with."

"Where to, Madame?"

"To the Barrière d'Enfer."

TWENTY-FIVE

The Abbé Clément

As SHE drove down the Rue de Bourgogne, she saw a young man covered with mud at the end of the Pont Louis Seize. Her heart beat violently. He was far from having overstarched frills; a black cravat, hardly better than a cord, failed to conceal the coarse stuff of a shirt which had not been put on fresh that morning—it was poor Abbé Clément.

Lamiel stopped the carriage; the footman got down, taking at least two seconds in his care for his tightly fitting lovely white stockings.

"Come, be quick!" impatiently exclaimed Lamiel, who used never to be sharp with servants. "Tell that gentleman in black that a lady wants to speak to him; ask him to get in the carriage."

The footman was so smartly clad and the Abbé Clément so simple, that he exhausted himself in salutes to the lackey. Whatever the latter said, the abbé answered with these words:

"How can I be of service to you, sir?"

At last he saw Lamiel, and in what garb! He

blushed to the whites of his eyes, and for the third time the footman repeated that Madame wanted to speak to him; the poor abbé still hesitated to get in.

A carriage which passed at a quick trot between Lamiel's and the pavement almost ran him down.

The footman took him under the arm and pushed him to Lamiel's side; she said:

"But get in! Are you ashamed of sitting beside me because of your calling? Well, let's go to some deserted quarter. To the Luxembourg!" she cried to the coachman. "How happy I am to see you again!" she said to the abbé.

The poor abbé was aware that he had many reproaches to address to her, but he was intoxicated with the light perfume rising from her clothes. He had no education in elegance, but like all souls born for the arts, he knew it instinctively; he could not stop gazing at Lamiel's costume, which seemed so simple.

And what a charm in the young peasant's manner! What gentle and divine glances!

"I suppose my costume's giving you scruples?" she said to the abbé.

When the carriage entered the Rue du Dragon, Lamiel made it pull up in front of a milliner's. She bought a very simple hat. On getting down at the gate of the Luxembourg towards the Rue de l'Odeon, she left it in the carriage and told the coachman to drive home.

The good Abbé Clément, quite bewildered at his

adventure, was starting on a polite remark which yet portended reproaches to follow.

"My dear and gentle protector, let me tell you all that's happened to me since Madame sent her poor reader away. Yes," resumed Lamiel laughing, "I'm going to confess to you. Will you grant me the secrecy of the confessional? You'll say nothing to the duchess, nothing to the duke?"

"Of course," replied the abbé with an air of wisdom, yet profoundly troubled.

"In that case, I'll tell you everything."

And, indeed, except for the episode of Jean Berville and the love which she thought she felt for the abbé at that time, she told him everything. And as in her desire to make him thoroughly understand the motive for her actions, she added every characteristic detail, her narrative lasted not less than an hour and a half. The abbé had time to recover himself a little. He addressed some moral and prudent reflections to her. But he soon felt that he admired her pretty hands too much; with shame he felt a longing to press them in his own and even approach them to his lips. He wanted to detach himself from her. He delivered a grave discourse on her aberrations, which he terminated with these words:

"I can only remain in your presence and see you again if you show a firm resolve to change your conduct."

Lamiel passionately wished to reason on all that had happened to her with so devoted a friend, in

whose lights she had such confidence and to whom she could tell everything. Since her departure from Carville, she had not been able to be sincere with anyone. She slightly exaggerated the strange disquiet which stirred in her, and pronounced the word "Repentance."

On hearing it, the abbé could not charitably refuse her a second meeting; he felt danger, but also said to himself:

"If anyone in the world may have some hope of leading her back to the right path, I am that person."

The good abbé made a great sacrifice in the grant of a second meeting, for, despite himself, a terrible idea was invading his heart.

"How easily does not this charming girl give herself, once her mind is convinced! She seems only to attach slight importance to what is so great an object to all women who, from vice or greed, do everything which she refuses to permit because of the lightness of her extraordinary character. After she has thus opened her heart, and with the affection she shows me, I should only have to say a word."

In the evening this idea seemed so terrible to the Abbé Clément's genuine piety, that he was on the point of setting off at once for Normandy. He could not close his eyes all night. The next morning his agitation redoubled.

"But perhaps," he pondered, "Lamiel is about to return to virtuous sentiments. If I arrive at persuading her, action will swiftly follow the conviction of the

mind—— If I leave, the chance is gone forever; I shall eternally reproach myself with the loss of so beautiful and noble a soul, in spite of its stains. Her head has led her astray, but her heart is pure."

In this agitation of mind, the honest young man went to consult the Abbé Germar, his director, who, touched by his virtue, at once decided; he ordered him to remain in Paris and undertake Lamiel's conversion.

For their meeting Lamiel had indicated a little inn at Villejuif, where a sudden indisposition had one day forced her to take refuge. She had been struck by the honest air of the mistress of the house. The abbé found her installed in a room on the second floor; all the others were engaged. He recoiled with surprise when he saw her. The ordinary hat, bought in the Rue du Dragon the evening before, was covered with a very thick black veil, and when Lamiel raised it, the abbé saw a face unknown to him. For Lamiel, who was beginning to learn how to read within hearts, thought that she had guessed the reason why, on the previous day, the abbé hesitated to grant her a second interview, and she had made herself ugly with the aid of holly-green.

She said to him, laughing:

"You seemed to think yesterday that flirting was the chief cause of my bad conduct. See what sort of a flirt I am!"

She went on, with a more serious expression:

"I didn't believe I was doing wrong in giving myself to young men who don't at all attract me. I want

to know if it's possible for me to love. Aren't I my own mistress? To whom am I doing any harm? With whom am I not keeping faith?"

Once entered into whys and wherefores, Lamiel soon made Abbé Clément run risks of a different kind from those he dreaded the day before. Her impiety was horrifying. The profound curiosity which was in truth her only passion, aided by the sort of impromptu education she had tried to give herself since the first days at Rouen with the duke, made her proffer remarks that seemed terrible to the young theologian, and to some of which he was incompetent to reply in a satisfactory manner.

Lamiel, seeing his embarrassment, was far from brutally profiting by this victory in spite of herself; she pictured the cruel attitude that the count would have adopted in her place; she had the joy of feeling herself superior.

"But you'll think, my friend, now that I've been talking to you for an hour about things that are merely curious, that I've entirely forgotten my first benefactors. What's become of my excellent Uncle and Aunt Hautemare? Do they curse me?"

The abbé, much relieved by this return to mundane matters, described to her in great detail how the Hautemares had conducted themselves with all the wisdom of the Normans. They had prudently adopted the fable which Lamiel had invented for them; everybody at Carville believed her in a village on the outskirts of Orléans, busy paying court to a very

old great-aunt and gaining a place in her will. All Carville had been agog over a postal order for a hundred francs cashed by the Hautemares, which the duke had had the idea of sending them from Orléans as part of a gift to Lamiel from the old aunt.

"It's true," said Lamiel reflectively, "that the duke was perfectly kind, like the duchess; only, he was so depressing."

She learnt with lively astonishment that the duke had been greatly excited by the belief that he loved her profoundly. He had sought her throughout Normandy and Brittany, deceived by the letter which Lamiel had dated from ——.

"Now the duke resists his mother; the passion he imagines himself to feel gives him character." Lamiel burst out laughing like a simple peasant.

"The duke with character?" she cried. "I'd give anything to see him!"

"Don't attempt it!" exclaimed the abbé, mistaking the nature of the young woman's sentiments. "Do you want to increase Madame's grief? I know by my aunt that what she calls her son's disobedience fills her with despair. She hopes to get him married, and she knows that when he is, he'll escape from her."

Lamiel's enquiries as to the happenings in the district were without end. She was already enough advanced in life to find a charm in returning to the innocent village memories. She learnt that Sansfin was in Paris; he had had the audacity to take the first steps to being put on the list of candidates for deputy

in the constituency where——[1] lived. His pretensions had been hailed with so general a peal of laughter that the little hunchback had not the courage to inhabit the region any longer. It seemed certain that one day, in the wood, blind with rage, he had pointed his gun at M. Frontin, the mayor's deputy, who had joked at his idea of standing as candidate with such a figure.

The numerous conversations which Lamiel obtained with the Abbé Clément enormously hastened the growth of her mind. She sometimes said things which were very alien to his creed and which he could not refute satisfactorily, or at any rate to her satisfaction. She concluded, not from self-esteem, but rather from esteem for the abbé's character and his good faith, that the things in question were true.

The abbé said to her:

"A man can only be known by seeing him every day over a long time."

Lamiel, that very evening, put the Marquis de la Vernaye in disgrace and cast charming glances at D——.

"I take you," she said, "so that I can laugh openly at the count and see him develop his character. I want to make him taste the pleasure of being deceived, but I don't want to sell you a pig in a poke. The part I intend you to play may be dangerous, and you'll only receive your reward when my lord and master yields to his first act of mad jealousy."

[1] Blank in the manuscript.

She had addressed herself to a man of courage. Next day there was a dinner in the Bois de Verrières, and D—— committed incredible follies to show his love for Lamiel. The count saw everything and his sombre character exaggerated everything; it was excess of rage that prevented an outburst on his part.

"What glory for that little Norman, and what a proof of inferiority on my side, if I had a duel for her!"

D—— was mad with love as soon as Lamiel's eyes showed love for him. He consulted Montror, who demanded secrecy from him and then said, in annoyance at certain discourteous remarks of d'Aubigné-Nerwinde:

"Run round the Paris hatters! You're sure to find one who's just set up shop; get a copy of the circular issued on such occasions; put the address 'M. Boucaud de Nerwinde, Périgueux,' at the bottom, and send it to your rival."

Montror revealed to D—— that the count's grandfather had been a hatter.

To enjoy the fury on the count's face, D—— gave him the circular at dinner. The count turned exceedingly pale, then said, after some minutes:

"I'm ill. I need air."

He went out and appeared no more that evening.

TWENTY-SIX

Conclusion

PLAN

UNDER THE rule of d'Aubigné-Nerwinde, she takes to living without restraint, in search of pleasure and freedom of spirit when she sees the count playing his eternal comedy. From inherent vanity she wishes to revenge herself on his profound indifference.

As she knows he is going to dine at the Tour de Nesles, where is to be found all the good company from the Opera—those ladies, etc., etc., and that after seeing them home there will be a visit to the b——l, she takes a black velvet mask of the kind worn in the eighteenth century and mingles with the daughters of joy. The count arrives; mattresses are placed on the floor; the gentlemen are seated around, joking. D'Aubigné begins to talk about her; she unmasks. The count, outwardly so bold, so proud of his superiority in everything, *remains stupefied.*

* * * * *

Valbayre reopens the door an instant after the departure of Lamiel's lover; in order to play a trick on the latter and see what he does, she hides herself; she sees Valbayre who, after looking round, quickly be-

gins to break open a desk. Lamiel discloses herself; he leaps on her with an open knife in his hand, taking her by the hair in order to stab her in the bosom; in her efforts, her scarf is disarranged and he sees her breast.

"On my faith, this becomes awkward!" he cries. He kisses her breast, then lets go of her hair.

"Denounce me and have me arrested, if you want!" he says to her.

This accomplishes her seduction. Here is a character! She does not say so to herself; she sees it, and undergoes its consequences.

"Who are you?"

"I make war on society, which makes war on me. I read Corneille and Molière. I am too educated to work with my hands and get three francs for ten hours' labor."

Although tracked by all the police, who have a personal animosity on account of his jokes against them, Valbayre proudly takes her to the theatre; such boldness makes her mad with love.

"Can it be that this love which is so extolled means nothing to me," Lamiel at one time asked.

At last, she knows love. She takes flight, lives with Valbayre and helps him in a crime.

Valbayre is imprisoned; she is in danger. Good Mme. le Grand hides her in a school for young ladies, which she enters as an undermistress; there she finds Sansfin as doctor's assistant. He wants to gain credit with the Duc de Miossens, who dreams of Lamiel because he is piqued by her disappearance (but he is

incapable of love and passion). Sansfin tells him he believes he has indications by which Lamiel may be found again; it is a matter of spending fifty louis; he gets a hundred out of the duke. The duke sees her again; she was bored at the school and consents to a reunion with him; but she is always desperately in love with Valbayre. The duke's acquired graces and good education in contest with Valbayre's energy and inventive genius. Valbayre's horrible misery contrasted with the duke's immense fortune. By this time Lamiel has enough knowledge of the world to judge the happenings of life soundly, especially with the aid of Mme. le Grand's faithful friendship. Lamiel is gloomy, the duke finds her much improved in style.

There is much question of the duke's marrying; his great indecision on the matter (Martial).[1] He delays the signature of the contract.

Sansfin says to Lamiel: "You're a fool; the duke's so undecided that you could prevent this marriage and wed him yourself."

"I, unfaithful to Valbayre!" cries Lamiel.

Lamiel has a fancy to see the Duchesse de Miossens at home; the profound boredom of that house, which pleases Lamiel in her gloomy mood.

The duchess goes so lightly clad to the ball, from a spirit of contradiction to the marquise, that her chest is affected.

"She's as good as gone," said Sansfin to Lamiel. "If you are prudent and follow my advice to the letter, you'll succeed her."

[1] Martial Daru.

There is no doubt of the duke's acquiescence, Lamiel has become necessary to him. Lamiel can have plenty of money and be useful to Valbayre.

Sansfin arranges the recognition of Lamiel as the child of an old libertine of the school of Laclos, without principles and without a halfpenny, the Marquis d'Orpierre, born in High Provence, near Forcalquier.

Valbayre appears before the Court d'Assises; he could be condemned to death, but is only sentenced to the galleys for life.

Through a convict liberated from the galleys, Valbayre orders Lamiel to aid a band of robbers to rob the duke. A booty of fifty thousand francs is expected. Terrible combats. Lamiel resists.

The duchess dies; Sansfin marries the duke to Lamiel and gets a large sum of money.

The duke and duchess visit Forcalquier. The Marquis d'Orpierre has recognized a natural daughter, of whom all his friends knew nothing.

The duke and duchess go to Toulon, she sees Valbayre in chains. Three days after, the duchess leaves her husband, taking all that he has given her.

At an exorbitant price, Valbayre buys a German gentleman's papers (he is from Strasbourg and speaks German), he returns to Paris, commits murder at random (like Lacenaire), and is condemned.

Lamiel sets fire to the Palais de Justice to avenge Valbayre; bones half reduced to ashes are found in the wreckage of the conflagration—they are Lamiel's.

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